S. C. Butler.

MODERN GRUB STREET AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

From a London Garden

Admissions and Asides

London Etchings

Billicks

In the Image of God

Love in London

The Shadow Show

A Man with a Past

Beyond Atonement

The Consecration of Hetty Fleet

East End Idylls

Famous Houses and Literary Shrines of London, Etc.

MODERN GRUB STREET & OTHER ESSAYS BY A. ST. JOHN ADCOCK

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W.

NOTE

Of these essays, "The Pampered Poor" was first published in the *Daily Mail*, and "The Social Ladder" in *Black and White* and in the *Weekly Scotsman*, about ten years ago. The rest, with two exceptions, have appeared more recently, "The Folly of Growing Old" in *Cassell's Magazine*, and others in the *Evening News*, the *London*, and other of the magazines and newspapers.

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MODERN GRUB STREET

I

THE SOCIAL LADDER

All the world's an eligible building plot, and all the men and women merely builders—all more or less busy raising this wonderful fabric of Civilised Society, much as the anxious builders of old built their Tower of Babel, and with very much the same object. They feared and were fortifying themselves against the possible coming of another Flood; we fear and are fortifying ourselves against our own natural, savage instincts and impulses; we are gradually raising our mighty fabric of civilisation higher and higher in the hope of making it too strong and high for any waters of barbarism ever to batter it down and flow over us again.

There are loafers in our midst, of course, who enjoy the advantages of our Tower of Babel

yet do nothing but look on whilst the rest of us work; there are lawless wretches who, not happy in harmless idleness, devote themselves to undermining and breaking up what we have built; but the majority of us are busy, one way or another, building, decorating and repairing our imposing structure of Civilised Society and methodically rebuilding those parts of it that are always falling to pieces.

The common multitude, the masses, the mere herd, as we superior persons call them, plod away darkly all their lives down in the cellarage and universal basement; an almost equally large crowd of the undistinguished is for ever drudging on the ground floor; fussier and presumably more important workmen are occupied on the different tiers of scaffolding higher and higher up, till on the uppermost circle you behold none but the very aristocracy of the building trade genteelly doing their day's work in kid gloves and conjuring daintily with jewelled trowels.

As for me, I am modestly contented to be occupied on the ground floor. From time to time, strolling round the wondrous building at leisure, I perceive friends of mine fighting on the social ladder, ambitious to be working and

showing themselves off a little on one of the upper stories, and they have my sympathy, though I am not tempted to compete with them.

Only last month, for instance, I saw Judkins like that, climbing desperately. Judkins and I had frequently agreed with each other that we were more than satisfied to put in our useful bit of work on the ground floor so long as there was still plenty of it to do there; but he unexpectedly inherited something considerable from an uncle and seemed somehow to feel that his money made him such a different man that the ordinary ground-floor mortal was no longer good enough to rub shoulders with him. So he started off up the ladder with his hod of golden bricks, and now I have to look up to him, and he looks down upon me condescendingly.

As a matter of fact, I can see that he is the same mortal creature he always has been, but he is obsessed by a delusion that the farther he climbs up the ladder, the nearer he gets to heaven, as it were, and therefore the more godlike he must needs become; and this delusion gives him courage to value himself above his fellows. He may spend his life in

squeezing and struggling for place and precedence on that overcrowded ladder and never get near the top ; he may be one of the many who are pushed off untimely by climbers above or below them, or one of the many who make a false step in their eagerness to get on quickly and are picked up by the police, crushed, broken and disreputable, on the pavement beneath. But there is always a chance that he may be lucky, and the lucky ones do not tumble off or die in the crush ; they scramble out on to one of the higher scaffoldings and enjoy the ecstatic feeling of being superior to the rabble who labour usefully on lower levels ; and the luckiest of all go on mounting, until at last they do reach the very top, and actually attain the felicity of stepping into nothing from the highest rung of the ladder.

It would be all laughable, if it were not all so pitiable.

This social ladder, with its crude chatter of lower classes, lower middle classes, middle classes, upper middle classes, upper classes and uppermost classes—all the windy madness and mockery of our snobbish social distinctions—how petty and how saddening the whole thing

looks when you have washed the gaudy paint off, stripped it of its pretty rags and tinsel, and laid it bare in its perishable humanity!

How is my Lord So-and-So essentially better than plebeian you or I? As often as not, he could not earn his own living if he were put to it, but because he inherited a vast estate from his father, who inherited it, with his title, from a long line of pompous but equally incompetent ancestors, he is to be accepted as our natural superior, and we are to consider it an honour if he takes notice of us. If you probe the matter, haply you shall discover that my Lord's greatest ancestor, the only capable one of the set, was nothing but a swashbuckler robber who came over with the Conqueror, enriched himself by murder and rapine, and so founded the noble family we delight to truckle to to-day. When ambitious men pursue similar methods nowadays in the attempt to achieve wealth which may result in their planting a genealogical tree and founding a lordly family, our unimaginative generation calls them burglars, hooligans, thieves, footpads, or something as uncomplimentary, claps them into prison and makes social outcasts of them.

Indeed, there is many a twentieth-century rogue whose only crime is that he was not born early enough; if he had lived nine centuries ago he could have committed his larcenies glamorously on a larger scale and instead of being snubbed as a felon he might have been raised to the peerage and established an honourable race that would have turned up its aristocratic nose now at men whose fathers were too foolishly honest to give their descendants a chance of being nobly born.

> "Beggars in every age and nation
> Are rogues and fools by situation;
> The rich and great are understood
> To be, of course, both wise and good."

In all our social relations we are thus continually letting the things that matter go by us, while we are hoodwinking ourselves or being hoodwinked by the things that do not matter. We are prouder to be on the visiting list of some "tenth transmitter of a foolish face," who has no merit beyond the wealth and title he has done nothing to deserve, than to number among our friends the saintliest saint who was ever out at elbows. We pay a readier respect to the 'Varsity man than to the man who was educated at a Board School; yet obviously the

one question that matters is, in the first case, what he has done, and in the second not where he was educated but what he learned there.

No one is willing to admit that he is stupid enough to be cheated by mere sound and show, yet we are all the dupes of names and appearances and too cowardly to break the spell that habit and tradition have cast upon us.

Here, for example, is the Honourable Mrs. Gadfly, who maintains a large establishment nobody would like to say how, who dresses elegantly, has acquired all the meaningless etiquette and polite stock-in-trade of fashionable society, but is in debt everywhere, buys what she knows she can never pay for, and is troubled with no remorse when her defalcations help to drive some common tradesman-creditor into bankruptcy, or worse—well, the tradesmen she does not pay are humbly subservient to her, and run bareheaded to conduct her to her carriage; intelligent men take their hats off respectfully to her in the streets, and are by no means ashamed to shake hands with her.

But, on the other hand, here is my charwoman, a decent widow, who works hard and lives meagrely, because she has three children

to support, and conscientiously pays cash for everything she buys. Are the tradesmen extra civil when they serve her? Can we shake hands with her without feeling that we condescend? And do I take my hat off to her when I pass her out of doors, or do you? What in Heaven's name is it, then, that we respect in man or woman and bare our heads to?

We are snobs in grain, every one of us. Our standards of social and moral worth are hopelessly at fault, but we shall not amend them, and shall not be deterred from fighting desperately for a foothold on the social ladder and trampling friends and enemies down in our ruthless progress upwards, even though at heart we are aware of the triviality and emptiness of the homage and the honours that our endeavours secure for us.

There are moods in which I cannot help feeling that the world and all that is in it resemble nothing so much as a litter of playthings tumbled out of a young giant's toybox. London is one of the toy cities he has built with his bricks; occasionally, by accident or because he grows dissatisfied or tired of playing, he knocks bits down and builds them again differ-

ently, and so will go on varying it, extending it, amusing himself with it till one day he shall weary of it altogether and brush it petulantly aside in a huddle of broken rubbish, as long since he shattered and brushed aside those dead, great cities that are dwindled to nothing but a rumour in the silence of the past.

Meanwhile, however, he fills his city with dolls' houses and goes on sorting, arranging and playing with his dolls. Into this gorgeous palace he puts a doll with a metal crown on its head, and calls it king of the other dolls; into these stately buildings in the selecter portions of his town, he puts his best-dressed dolls and calls them lords and ladies, choosing those and others of the more favoured of his toy men and women to dwell apart and form a toy aristocracy. He ranks his professional dolls above his unprofessional; separates his tradesmen dolls, giving the wholesale traders more dignity than the retail, and subdividing the retail into innumerable higher and lower sections; while into the meaner corners of his city he crowds his cheaper dolls, the ones that have got chipped, or soiled, or are dressed in the commonest rags, and these are his mere people—the masses.

The most laughable or most pitiable thing about it is that the dolls come to take the game seriously and persuade themselves that they are veritably what the giant-child pretends them to be. They know, in their hearts, that they are all stuffed with the same sawdust, yet certain of them delude themselves into believing that they are better than other dolls because they wear better clothes and live in better houses. Some give themselves ludicrously aggressive airs as if they were convinced that they were indispensable to the game; but the giant-child soon wears them out, tosses them aside, one after the other, without a pang, and puts new ones in their places. I often think how ridiculous and humiliated such as these must feel could they see themselves—last week swelling and swaggering with self-importance, and this week lying quietly with the earth over them and the men they treated as inferiors still alive and of some account.

There are other moods in which I fancy that it is we who are the children, and the toy cities and the dolls are ours. As the smaller child is "pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw," even so are we larger infants pleased

with a title, tickled with a star, and able to wear our medals with unblushing complacency to intimate that we are richer or more honourable than our neighbours.

We play at being lords and ladies, we wrangle and fight among ourselves for this or that important or unimportant footing on the social ladder ; we dandle our pride of birth or wealth, amuse ourselves for a little while with our painted, tawdry social distinctions and are such very children that it is hard to be severe with us, we are so simple, so childlike, so easily pleased or angered with such pathetically worthless trifles.

Quite gravely, we talk of growing up and getting old, but except in a very superficial sense we never do grow up and never do get old ; we call our nurseries by other names, perhaps, but they are nurseries still, and we play in them all day until the night comes, and then we go unwillingly to bed, fretting, and childishly hugging the poor toys that a patient and compassionate nurse takes from our sleeping hands at last.

II

THE LITERARY LIFE

It did not encourage me when, at a very early stage of my career, I read an article by Grant Allen in which he roundly asserted that a man had better sweep a crossing than take to literature or journalism for a livelihood. But I never contemplated following his advice, and have now had enough experience of my own to be able to disagree with him. No doubt, if your sole aim is to make plenty of money in a short time, you were wiser to leave both the pen and the broom alone and turn to brewing or to company promotion ; and if your end is fame in addition to money, you will get there easier and quicker by learning to play football, or inventing a patent digestible food.

If, however, you have a reasonable aptitude for literary pursuits and are content to accept the pleasure of indulging it in part payment for your labours, you may have to face lean years of hardship, impecuniosity, disappoint-

ment, but eventually, so that you are sufficiently energetic and adaptable, you can earn a much more comfortable and congenial income with your pen than any broom would ever have yielded you.

I have done it myself, at all events; and I started with no points in my favour. I was not one of those happy strugglers who, every time they fall, have affluent family connections waiting to catch them; nor had I private means on which I was able to subsist whilst I was working and waiting for the tide in my affairs that might lead me on to fortune. As a fact, I dare say I have been hampered by as many disadvantages as one man could very well labour under. I have lacked self-confidence; have been absurdly sensitive and diffident; have been too ready to give way and believe that others were better men than myself because they complacently fancied that they were and clothed themselves in airs of spurious importance. Then, though worry and hard work have toughened me and given me a good constitution nowadays, through all my earlier years I was so poor in health that the Life Insurance companies refused to deal with me; withal, as I say, I possessed no

influential relatives, and have never had a penny more than I could manage to earn for myself. In short, I sat to the game with no trumps in my hand, and nothing up my sleeve.

I

Beginning the world very young, I became a clerk in a lawyer's office, and continued to amuse myself in my leisure by writing stories and verse that I had no thought of offering anywhere for publication. When, in due season, I grew ambitious and started sending manuscripts about, they almost invariably came back. My first printed story appeared in a ladies' magazine and was not paid for. I was about twenty before I scored a success that seemed worth mentioning: that was when a story was accepted by "Home Chimes," and its editor, the late F. W. Robinson, wrote saying it was "as good as a sketch by Boz," and invited me to send more.

At twenty-three, I married; and six years later I resigned my post in a City office and set about making a living with my pen. In the interval, I had been hard at work tempting all manner of editors with all manner of contributions. I had contributed largely to

"Household Words," to some of Cassell's publications, to various weekly newspapers; I had done my tale of turnovers for the "Globe," occasional articles for other evening papers, verses and essays for "Chambers's Journal," and wherever else I could get them taken; and at this juncture, I remember, I was greatly heartened by the receipt of a scarcely readable note from James Payn, accepting a story for the "Cornhill."

Before emancipating myself from my City desk—for my lack of self-confidence always made me cautious—I secured a sort of assistant editorship of a technical journal devoted to engineering and mechanical inventions: this brought me in a small but certain income and occupied me two days a week. I knew absolutely nothing of the technical affairs with which the paper concerned itself and sometimes wonder now how I managed to fake up my three or four weekly pages of paragraphs and articles without stumbling into grotesque and fatal errors. Also, by sending manuscripts there more and more frequently, it had come to pass by the time I set up as an author by profession that, without my knowing who the editor was or making any kind of arrangement

with him, I was contributing a short farcical story every week to "Scraps," which, with occasional humorous verse to the same paper, brought me in, from that source, rather less than a hundred a year.

Incidentally, I wrote a little now and then for divers trade organs, and, because I had a superstition against refusing any work that offered itself, I contributed, for the smallest of small pay I ever collected, biographies of celebrated tradesmen to a series of provincial directories.

For the larger part of the next three years I went on working in this fashion. I had no acquaintance with editors except the one who presided over that technical journal, and the only men of my craft with whom I was on terms of intimacy were not in a position to do more for me than I could do for them.

Suddenly, what little luck I had been having, seemed to desert me entirely and without warning. First, the technical journal failed; in the same month, my weekly humorous story was discontinued—a change in the style of the paper left only an occasional opening for it; worse still, my health, always precarious, broke

down completely and for ten long months I was crawling about more dead than alive. If you have tried to write whilst you were in continual pain and your mind and hands were relaxed by a lethargy of sheer weakness, you will guess that the stories and articles I wrote then were as poor as my health—anyhow, wherever I sent them they came back with distressing monotony. Through it all, however, I stuck to my rule of keeping a minimum of twenty manuscripts constantly on their rounds; when three or four were accepted, three or four new ones had to be got out promptly to supply the deficiency; and I never went to bed with a rejected manuscript lying on the table. If it arrived by the last post, it was on its travels again before midnight, unless it was looking the worse for wear. Since editors are human and their confidence in their own judgment is sometimes limited, I thought, and still think, it is best that they should never be able to tell from its appearance that a manuscript has been declined elsewhere. Therefore, I have written several stories and articles six and eight times over; but there are not more than a half-dozen out of some four or five thousand that I did not, sooner or later, dispose of.

In that unfortunate year of mine, having no regular engagements, I sat down to write a novel. I had not written one since those earlier days when I was always writing them as a pastime and with no notion of publishing. I wrote and rewrote this inside three months, and being by then unpleasantly hard up, offered the serial rights to a weekly newspaper for twenty pounds, cash down, and got it. My total earnings in that year did not amount to ninety pounds. When the novel had finished its serial appearance, I tried to sell it for book purposes; it was rejected by one or two publishers, then accepted by one who agreed to pay a fair royalty but would make no advance on account of it. The critics praised the story almost without stint, though in those days I knew none of them; but how it sold I shall never know in this world and I take it it will not matter—at least, not to me—in the next. For three years I endeavoured intermittently to persuade the publisher that he ought to render me an account and disgorge some money, and finally he retorted by going bankrupt and paying no dividend.

II

In the meantime, I had collected a dozen of my short stories into another volume, which I sold outright for thirty pounds; and from that time onwards I have found publishers for an average of two books each year, five only of which have been written to order.

But I could never have maintained my small household adequately on the profits of my books. My chief source of income has all the while been derived from the reviewing of other people's books, the writing of serials, short stories, articles, essays, topical and other verse, and contributing, largely as an outside contributor, to many of the best, and some of the worst, papers in England. For a considerable part of these later years, too, I have acted as editor of one monthly magazine and reader for another.

By now, I believe I have contributed, in my own name, anonymously, or over one of my half-dozen or so of pen-names, to nearly all the well-known monthlies, weeklies and dailies, except the "Times." I only once offered anything to the Thunderer: I sent some satirical verses concerning the German Em-

peror at a stage of the Boer War when he made himself objectionably aggressive, and the editor, who had no more knowledge of me than I had of him, surprised me by returning them with a most kindly and laudatory note saying that, though they were a little too irresponsible for the "Times," he felt sure "Punch" would be glad to use them if I offered them there. But "Punch" was not.

First and last, I have done every kind of journalism but reporting. Moreover, I have written services of song and hymns for Messrs. Curwen; have contributed humorous verse to "Punch" and the "Sketch"; serious and frivolous verse and prose to the "Spectator," "Speaker," "Outlook," "Academy," "Monthly Review," "Tit-Bits," "Queen," "London Opinion," "To-Day," "London Magazine"; to the "Sunday Magazine," and the "Financial Times," to a Church newspaper and a poultry organ—but the list is far too long to continue. I have contributed eight serials to five different London papers, to say nothing of four that were syndicated in provincial newspapers; and until the last six or seven years practically all this work has been sent in uninvited, with stamped envelopes en-

closed for its return if it were found unsuitable.

As reader for the monthly magazine I have mentioned, one of the things that surprised me most was the fatuous carelessness of many contributors. Again and again, I have discovered left between the leaves of a manuscript the usual printed notice indicating that it had been declined by some other publication. Sometimes a manuscript has had an editor's note on one of its pages calling attention to a glaring flaw in the plot; and the author has posted it off again with the note overlooked and the flaw uncorrected. Frequently it would be so dirty and dog-eared as to carry its own hopeless tale on the face of it. Quite as often it was evident that the would-be contributor had not taken the trouble to examine the contents of the magazine and ascertain that what he submitted was suited to its programme; hence, to a publication given over to fiction and popular articles, he would dispatch a serious scientific treatise, a heavy historical disquisition, a ponderous record of ordinary travel, a narrative poem long enough to fill a whole number.

Such writers as these unjustly curse the fate

they prepare for themselves; they will never arrive at success because, for one thing, they don't go the way to get there. Once an eager person came into the office of that magazine and explained to the patient editor that he had travelled round the world and written stories for many other periodicals and would like to write some for ours. He did not care to write them, he said, unless he could be sure they would be taken, but finally he consented to submit one on approval, and then casually enquired, "By the way, is your magazine a weekly or a monthly?" and being answered, fumbled in his pocket and asked if he could buy a copy there. He was not really mad, but he did not know what he was doing, and I merely present him as a true and awful example of how not to do it.

At the same time, my experience as reader there convinced me that those who sneer at the outside contributor and assert that of all he offers not one manuscript in a hundred is worth looking at are saying the thing that is not. I suspect it is an easy legend that lax editors have promulgated in self-defence, and I wonder whether the complaint of the unknown aspirant that as often as not his manu-

script is returned to him unread is entirely without foundation? Anyhow, I have examined some hundred manuscripts weekly out of which I could generally weed thirty or more that were worth a full reading; and of these an average of five or six, mainly the work of unknown authors, were found worth accepting, and if they were not all used it was because there was not always room for them. What astonished me most was the number of feeble and unsaleable stories that had to be declined and returned to comparatively celebrated authors.

Another discovery I made was that nine-tenths of the poorest stuff that came under my notice was sent in by literary agents. And their general system of sending it confirmed me in an opinion that to the unknown author the literary agent is sometimes useless and sometimes a positive disadvantage. Here would be eight or nine crude manuscripts by raw beginners all stuffed into one big envelope. Because my past experiences have made me uncomfortably conscientious in such matters, I used to go through every one of them religiously, but I do not believe the average busy editor would do more than glance at the first two or three—irritated to find how im-

possibly bad they were, he would, not unpardonably, assume that the rest were no better and feel that he could not waste more of his time upon them.

There are exceptions; some agents use a little judgment in deciding what work they will handle, but not many of them. The beginner who cannot get his writings accepted goes to an agent, thinking he has facilities that are not available to the author himself; but the plain truth is that, however good your work may be, no agent can do much for you until you have done a good deal for yourself. You have got to make your own market, then an agent can carry your goods to it for you, relieve you of the haggling over terms, the bother of business details, and probably secure higher prices for you than you would have obtained in person. Until you have made your market, he can only send your manuscripts round as you could send them yourself, with this difference, that whereas you would post them singly, he sends each one in a parcel of other and, possibly, inferior manuscripts; yours may be the one good item in an otherwise deplorable batch, and it is liable to be condemned unread because of the company it keeps.

III

If you happen to have a competence and are not under the necessity of earning the money for each week's needs, go into the country, live quietly, write only what you are able to write best and make what you can by it, and if you are not happy, you have mistaken your vocation. If, however, you have no such modest independence, then until you have produced a book that booms I do not see how you are to make a satisfactory living as a literary free-lance except in some such fashion as I have done it myself; and in that case here are a few "Don'ts" that may be of service to you till you have been at the business long enough to put up signposts of your own :—

Don't rely on making much out of poetry; only one or two papers pay anything like an adequate price for it. I have made two hundred a year by writing humorous verse for various weeklies and dailies, but I doubt if I have derived so much as a hundred pounds in the whole of my life from the writing of more serious verse; and for the behoof of a pottering literary person who denounced my sordid outlook

when I mentioned this once before, I may add that, for sentimental reasons, I am more than satisfied that this should be so.

Don't write long letters to an editor. He has other correspondents and only the orthodox number of hours to his day.

Don't call on an editor, unless you have very special reasons for doing so, or unless he asks you to. If your presence and manner are not impressive and assertive, the chances are he will not think so well of you after he has met you as he did before, and this is not good from a business standpoint. The hero ceases to be a hero to his intimates, as well as to his valet; the man we know is never quite such a clever fellow as the man we don't know.

Don't betray a manuscript by sending it out soiled; always rewrite or retype it.

Don't be discouraged or attach too much significance to the rejection of your work. The soundest of critics are far from infallible; an editor's judgment is not independent of his moods, and his moods are often "servile to all the skiey influences." Of my own short stories I have found that the critics praised

most highly, when I collected them in book form, those that had been rejected by many of the magazines and accepted at last by some London or provincial newspaper. I do not pretend to account for it; I simply state the fact. James Payn (whom I never knew) reviewed a book of my short stories in a Manchester newspaper to which he contributed a causerie, and the one he selected for special eulogy and quotation was one he had rejected when I sent it to the "Cornhill." The second poem I contributed to the "Spectator" had been rejected by sixteen inferior periodicals, and it brought me a letter of warmest commendation from the then editor, Mr. Hutton.

Don't depend upon literary agents; they cannot run you till you have got on your feet.

Don't trouble about getting introductions; they do you little or no good. Your own work is the strongest, most effective introduction you can have, and in the long run no editor is influenced by any other.

Whatever you are asked to do, don't think it beneath you or do it half-heartedly. Every-

thing is interesting, if you will only interest yourself in it.

I used to say it was ridiculous and useless to be complacently and aggressively confident concerning your own merits, but I have rather altered my opinion on that score. The world in general does take you at your own valuation, and I have known so many of the shrewdest of editors and men who have sneered at the pretensions and cocksureness of some fourth or fifth-rate scribbler and yet have been subtly influenced thereby in spite of themselves. It is a platitude (as most truths are) that a little ability with a swaggering show of much are more immediately valuable assets than much ability with a modest assumption of little.

III

THE PAMPERED POOR

"I TELL you, the way everybody pampers the lower classes," growled the Major, lolling farther back in the Club arm-chair and stretching his feet towards the comfortable fire, "——well, it simply makes my blood boil!"

"It has made mine boil so often," yawned the languid Youngest Man in the Club very languidly, "that I begin to feel as if it had all boiled over and I hadn't a drop left in me."

"The papers are full of articles about the poor——"

"And we are expected to read them."

"Parliament is always talking about the poor——".

"And taxing us for them."

"Half the people who write are writing books about the poor——"

"Which they expect us to buy."

"Look at all our precious rulers—there they are, building public baths for them, presenting

them with open spaces, band-stands, bank holidays, free libraries, free education, free days at the National Gallery, cheap trams, Old Age Pensions—everything! It's just as I say, while the poor have everything done for them, nobody ever dreams of doing anything for us!"

"I have often thought the same myself, Major," said the languid young man impressively; "but I have never dared to say so. I haven't got the courage of you military men."

"Courage be damned!" snarled the Major. "You can see for yourself—it is the wealthy classes who are downtrodden and neglected, and whatever's worth having is given to the poor."

"Yes, and to the lower-class poor, too. Nobody thinks of making any provision for the upper-class poor—don't you forget that, Major."

"I don't, my boy. I've said scores of times—we pay the bulk of the taxes, and what good does it do us?"

"None whatever," sighed the languid young man. "There's an Army—so that the poor who don't like football can play at soldiers; there's an expensive police force—so that those who are poor but honest can be constables

and amuse themselves by locking up those who are poor but not; there are all sorts of factories and things kept going for the beggars to work at, if they want to earn a living; there are casual wards for them and workhouses—in fact, whatever is required for their comfort and convenience, they have it, and directly or indirectly we have to pay for most of it."

"Things have got to such a pitch," interrupted the Major, "that I want to know why are we such tame fools as to submit to it? That's what I want to know."

"We can't help ourselves, Major. The poor, nowadays, are really the privileged class. I don't pretend to understand much about such things, but they've got their Poor Laws, and they tyrannise over us with them. There are no Rich Laws, you know," remarked the languid young man, with increasing gravity. "Apparently we govern the country and do what we like—but we don't. We are the slaves of the poor. Carnegie's found that out. Once upon a time he was poor but happy. Now he has become rich and can't think or talk of anything but the blessings of poverty. You know he said some while ago he hopes to be poor again before he dies. That's why he keeps on

giving away free libraries—he's anxious to recover from being so rich, but it looks to me as if it was incurable."

"Nonsense! We could all be poor if we wanted to; it's easy enough——"

"That's where you're wrong, Major—it isn't. It's harder for a rich man to become poor than for a poor one to become rich. You could get rid of all your money, of course, but that wouldn't make you properly poor—not so that you could enjoy the blessings of poverty. The really and truly poor are like the poets—born, not made. You take my word for that, Major, and don't ruin yourself rashly. Take the Honourable Fitz, now—would you say he was poor, or wouldn't you?"

"He never has enough to pay back what he borrows, anyhow," grumbled the Major.

"Well, there you are! What could be sadder than that?" the languid man asked with feeling. "The Honourable Fitz is poor, but he doesn't enjoy it—not a little bit; he doesn't get any blessings out of it. And why doesn't he? Because he wasn't actually born poor. He was born and reared with all the nice tastes of a man who is doomed to live on twelve thousand a year. He resigned himself

to that ; he strenuously trained himself up not to live on a penny less. Then, all of a sudden, the bottom falls out of Fitz's financial world, and there he is left to worry along on a paltry two thousand and, of course, he finds it can't be done. He pinches himself here, knocks off a subscription to a church or benevolent society there, does without asparagus and motor-cars, and so on, and yet can't keep the wolf from the door, and has to owe as much as he can't borrow and sometimes more.

"Everything," the young man continued, "is comparative, and comparatively, Fitz is worse off than a pauper. You see, Major, a pauper has no family pride to maintain, no appearance to keep up ; he simply has to live on nothing as comfortably as he can. But here's poor Fitz—worse than destitute—practically living on less than nothing, for it costs him twice as much as he's got.

"Now, if he had been born poor and so could afford to ignore appearances, he would move quietly into a cheap workman's-dwelling flat, and when the larder was empty he wouldn't fag about, borrowing money; it would not be necessary ; he would just stroll round to the nearest soup-kitchen with a basin. You may

argue that he could do it now; but I deny that. Think for a moment—think of Fitz in his crush hat and dress clothes and eye-glass taking his turn with a low lot of ruffians outside a soup-kitchen. Impossible! It's too brutal to be thought of!"

The languid young man covered his face with his hands and was shaken with suppressed emotions.

"No," he resumed gloomily, "there is no provision for the upper-class poor, Major; but there ought to be. Give them, I say, something equivalent to the poor man's soup-kitchen. It should be possible, when necessary, for the Honourable Fitz to get a ticket for a free meal of, say, four courses at some respectable place like the Hotel Cecil. That would be nothing more, by comparison, than giving him his basin of soup at a soup-kitchen. But no—Fitz is on the wrong side of what experts call the poverty line——"

"What is the poverty line?"

"Well, so far as I can make out, it is a sort of clothes line, and if Fitz had only been born on the right side of it he would have had poverty with all the blessings thrown in. As it is, he is one of the upper-class poor, and

nothing is provided for them—no out-door relief, no genteel workhouse—nothing!

"There are Board Schools for the natural poor. Why can't Oxford, say, or Cambridge be run on Board School lines for the children of the upper-class poor? Treats are organised and the offspring of the low poor are sent off in brakes for a day in the country. Is anything equivalent done for the children of the upper-class poor? Are they ever sent, with silver mugs, saloon tickets, and a footman to every half-dozen, for a month on the Riviera? You know they are not.

"Then look what newspapers and books say about the idle, wicked lives we lead—and yet what happens? Where are all the missions working? Where is the Salvation Army? Not doing house-to-house visitations in Mayfair. They don't bother about us and our souls—they don't consider we're worth it. Nobody cares for anybody but the poor in this country. Why, down East, where they can't afford to be half so wicked as we can, you find missionaries walking into people's drawing-rooms and insisting on doing things for them. Do they take as much trouble in Park Lane? Did you ever see a missionary walk straight

into old Lady Golightly's drawing-room, sinner as we all know she is, put his hat on the table and tell her exactly what he thought of her while he sorted out a few suitable tracts ? "

" I should think not ! Why, of course, that—— "

" No. They only look after the poor. They don't care what happens to the rich or where we go to. If they did we should have our Rescue Associations, Missions, and all the rest of it. But just because we've got plenty of money they don't think we're worth anything."

" Oh, that's—— Look here ! " the Major burst forth, eyeing the languid young man's pensive visage with fierce suspicion, " if you mistake me for a fool——"

" Mistake you ! " ejaculated the young man, rising, deeply hurt. " My dear Major, I know you too well ! "

IV

POETRY AND THE PUBLIC

When a critic sneers at the public taste, as critics often do, it proves only that he is very well satisfied with his own ; when a poet does so, as poets commonly do, it proves no more than that he is not popular, and considers he ought to be. In every age poets complain that they have no public ; in every age, on the other hand, the public complain that they have no poets ; and the critics, though they unite in despising the general reader, have profoundly agreed with both sides—that being an impressive critical attitude.

Our own day is, in these particulars, curiously like the days that have gone before it ; and I confess that, in the main, my sympathies are not with the poets, but with the public they haven't got. If you are an uncommonly superior genius and avowedly write for posterity, you cannot rationally expect your immeasurably inferior contemporaries to appreciate

you ; yet there are among us those who aim at the moon and then curse their fate that they do not hit the haystack as well. This sort of man will, in all probability, not hit even the moon, but he will die without knowing that. If you write for your contemporaries and fail to attract them, the fault is as likely to be yours as theirs ; and it is a mistake to count your unpopularity in along with your other virtues. We all write for the public, of course ; for even posterity is the public ; and I think if I scorned them I should have enough self-respect not to publish anything. Shakespeare wrote for the man in the street, and every one of those precious creatures who have been too select to write for any but the man in the study ranks a long way below him.

When any dainty-writing person assures you that the world at large has no love for poetry and no knowledge of it, you may depend that he is so crudely self-centred as to be simply unacquainted with the world at large and to know nothing of the mind or the heart of it.

> "'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste
> Of all beyond itself."

Certainly there are, here and there, men and women who really have no souls, or whose

souls have become, through their own folly or misfortune, so dulled and blind and deaf—

> "such beetle things
> As only buzz to heaven with evening wings"—

that they retain none of their higher instincts, no imaginative faculty, no feeling for beauty of thought, or word or vision; but these are a minority, and always have been. The vast majority of everyday human beings have a profound reverence for the poet, and are sensitive to the appeal of poetry in whatever shape it may come to them.

But poets and critics alike seem apt to forget that poetry is not exclusively a matter of rhymes, or books, or printed words, and that at least two-thirds of this general world which they despise work too hard and earn too little to have the necessary opportunities for reading poetry, or the money to buy it. Happily, however, the greatest poetry of all is not written and never will be, but is still to be had, like Heaven itself, without money and without price; it comes to the workaday millions with every sunset and with the stars at night; they hear it in the wind and the storm, and in the awful voice of the thunder; they see it in the eyes of those that love them; it looks

on them from the flowers they tend in their small window-boxes and in the bordered plots of the little garden grounds behind their dwellings; it thrills them with compassion from some story of a neighbour's sufferings; or fires them with pride and admiration out of tales of heroism in far-off battles, or in perils of flood and fire and mine disaster nearer home; it colours their dreams of past and future happiness, and is the sacred lamp that burns for ever before the memories of their dead; it is the root of all their ambitions, the light of all their hopes, and is none the less poetry because they never think of giving it that name.

And when I consider the hardness of their lives, their brave contentment, the joy they can find in little things, their many privations —and see for how few hours of each day's life they are set free from the slavery of office, shop and warehouse routine, it so humbles me that I have not the arrogance or self-sufficiency to condemn them because they will not stint themselves and theirs of bread, or even of beer, in order that they may purchase a three-and-sixpenny bookful of poetry, whilst they can open their eyes and their hearts and enjoy a whole worldful of it every day for nothing. Surely

it were a stupid and sordid thing for a poor man to lay out hard cash on some bard's or bardlet's pretty Spring pipings when the very spirit of Spring is all about him in the morning sunshine and in the sweeter music of those feathered poets who know nothing of print and fret after no man's praises.

Lamb wrote to the young Quaker poet who talked of the joys of living by literature: "Trust not the public; you may hang, starve, drown yourself for anything that worthy personage cares." Wordsworth spoke of "the pure, absolute, honest ignorance in which all worldlings of every rank and situation must be enveloped with respect to the thoughts, feelings and images on which the life of my poems depends." Keats referred to the much-maligned public as "a thing I cannot help looking upon as an enemy, and which I cannot address without feelings of hostility." All which and more to the same effect from similar men is mere thoughtlessness and petulance, and unworthy of their greatness; especially when you remember that it was not the crowd but the cultured critics who greeted two out of these three with boorish ridicule and condemnation.

Each man has to live before he is in a position to do anything else, and each man of us, whether he likes it or not, has to sacrifice something of his better qualities, many of his finer inclinations to the grim business of making a livelihood. To me there is a touch of farce in the notion that a worried stockbroker, a necessarily preoccupied lawyer, a harassed tradesman, who is perhaps staving off a threatened bankruptcy, ought to be able to find time and subdue himself to the mood to sit down, amidst his squalid schemings and strivings, and read with mental or moral profit "We are Seven," "The Witch of Atlas," or the "Ode on a Grecian Urn." You might as reasonably expect that a hungry eagle should satisfy his cravings with canary seed, or that a hippopotamus should win an ecstasy from the contemplation of a primrose. The poetry of Nature can reach men, even the busiest of them, at any time, in any place, and can touch them for the moment with the mood for its reception; but you can make nothing of the poetry of books unless you are able to sit down in the mood for it, and this presupposes leisure to cultivate the mood; which again presupposes the possession of means without the need

of working too continuously or too strenuously to obtain them.

That is why men who really love written poetry read less of it and little of it after they have left their youth behind them. With the inevitable increase of responsibilities and anxieties, and under the growing burden of less congenial, more exacting interests, they lose the mood with the leisure for such reading; and to pour scorn on them for so doing is to blame them short-sightedly for neglecting their pleasures rather than their duties. Man cannot live by poetry alone, unless he is blessed with inherited affluence.

And this applies to poets themselves even more than to their readers. One thing needful to the growth of a great poet is that he should have a modest competence and at least comparative freedom from mean and paralysing monetary difficulties. A poor poet makes poor poetry. Shakespeare, as actor-manager and dramatist, wisely devoted himself simultaneously to making both poetry and money. Chaucer, Spenser, Milton—all of them, lacking private incomes, did their share in the ordinary work of the world and so saved themselves from the poverty that kills the poet.

No poet expects or greatly wishes that, like common articles of commerce, his divine gift should prove a source of vulgar riches, and those who, yearning to devote their lives entirely to the Muses, starve in garrets, have never been more than half poets. They complain because they cannot conquer the world with their rhymes, and the man who complains is a weakling; they plead for pity and patronage, but no man wants either, and your whole-poet is also a whole-man. There is more and nobler poetry behind Hood's "Faithless Nelly Gray," written to keep the pot boiling for his wife and family, than in Ben Jonson's glorious, truculent Ode to himself against the public who damned the play that his warmest admirers now admit was one of his worst.

After all, it is a harder and more splendid thing to live a poem than to write one. If a man hears the call and gives himself over utterly to obeying it; if he sees fit to sacrifice his material comfort and prosperity, or his very life, withal, to the service of Poetry, we can have nothing but honour and highest admiration for him. There is no occasion for condescending reproof of a busy, care-laden public who failed to buy his books; and no

occasion for pity. He chose to follow the gleam and, so doing, found a happiness he never could have found in anything else. But the poet who selfishly puts his wife and children and the rest of his relations on that altar and sacrifices them also to his art is a vain and contemptibly small creature and no great poetry ever comes out of him, because none is in him.

Doubtless in an ideal world we should all read poetry, and perhaps most of us would write it. But this is a raw, real world with painful and wearying work to be done in it for most of us, with misery in it, and sickness and hunger, and sordid, unescapable demands of the hour that keep the two hands of a man and all his thoughts fully employed; and looking round and seeing what life means to the majority, I would no more blame them for not reading poetry than I would sneer at them for not drinking champagne instead of the cheaper ales that they can afford to indulge in. As a matter of fact, most of them do know something of the great poets of the past; they have seen Shakespeare acted; they have some acquaintance with Byron, Tennyson, Browning, Keats, Shelley; the reproach usually levelled against them is that they do

not encourage the poets of their own generation. Well, it has been part of my business to read a large number of those poets, and I do not particularly wonder that when the average public have a trifle to spare they spend it on the reliable bards who are dead.

For what do you get in nine-tenths of the poetry that is coming from the press to-day? Mere prettiness, large-headed affectations, or shoddy novels in rhyme that are supposed to be realistic because they are squalid, and powerful because they are violent; nice little word-pictures, charmingly frail little songs, pretentious phrase-mongering with here and there a stunted soul of meaning trying desperately to use its wings in such a bewilderment of frills and flounces and shiny finery of language that it never achieves more than a momentary flutter, and only the most patient reader can, after much peeling and unravelling of it, pluck out any core of meaning at all. I have read these books, and in most of them have found nothing sufficient to nourish the spiritual life in any healthy man; therefore I am so far from despising the general public for not buying more of them that I wonder why they buy so many as they do. With one

or two exceptions, our modern poets are quite out of touch with life; they guess at passions they have never felt, at phases of life they have never experienced, and make their poetry a matter of art only; thus it is sometimes beautiful but always dead, and always a smaller thing than is even less polished poetry that is written out of the very heart and life of the man who writes it.

There is a romantic tradition that an author must have been dead and buried a respectable time before his greatness can be recognised; but how many of our great authors have failed to gain recognition and a considerable measure of popularity during their own lives? The authors whom posterity has rescued from neglect or oblivion have invariably been authors of the second, third or even fourth rank, and if they were overlooked by the public of their day, they were generally overlooked as well by the critics of their day who, in the pretence to mere literary capacity, claim almost as much superiority to the rabble public as the poets themselves do.

It is easy and sounds important to dismiss the public as mostly fools, but I think they would be far more foolish if, to gratify the

vanity of a lot of little poets and a few great ones, they dissipated their scanty savings on what they do not want and have no time to enjoy. You do not expect a soldier to go campaigning with a choice commissariat of Benedictine and Turkish Delight, why then should you scorn the struggling million, out on a longer and more arduous campaign, because they are unable to sustain themselves mentally and morally on epics, lyrics, sonnets, and even the finest flowers of modern poetry? Let us be reasonable, and not blindly assume that a man has no soul because he has not the time, or cash, or the humour to furnish himself generously with that smaller part of poetry that some of us have a genius or a talent for translating into words. Great poetry is largely the fruit of leisure, and requires leisure for its adequate enjoyment; wherefore until, by legislation or otherwise, we have brought back the Golden Age, so that, the needs of bare existence making fewer claims upon our minds and energies, we can sit about at ease and comfortably cultivate the graces, I have no word of censure or of disrespect for the decent multitude who leave the printed poetry of the hour unbought—my own amongst it.

V

POVERTY MARKET

It is foggy everywhere to-night; it is especially foggy at Hoxton.

On the main road traffic is audible, but scarcely to be seen—buses and carts are as vague clouds that roll past in the thick darkness, muttering thunderously. Street lamps and shop-windows make luminous blots and smears of dirty yellow on the dirtier gloom; and to turn down one of the narrow byways is like walking into a tunnel full of smoke. Phantom voices sound weirdly round about; shadowy people flit by in the stifling gloom; and deep in the reek of one such tunnel a larger building bulks above the huddle of little houses and becomes dimly visible by reason of a hazy flare of light that streams from its long row of upper windows. A lamp above the door bears the words: "Mission Hall"; below it, a growing crowd shivers and chats patiently.

Within, the building is so misty with filter-

ings of fog from without that every gas-jet wears a halo. The big, bare hall upstairs has been prepared for the holding of an annual "rummage sale," or sublimated rag fair, the articles to be sold having been collected from charitable dwellers in surrounding parishes; the poor of the neighbourhood are admitted by penny tickets, and the profits are to replenish the funds of the Mission.

Improvised counters, heavily laden, line each side of the room; three parts of one are devoted to all manner of draperies, the fourth part being overstocked with a miscellany of second-hand boots and shoes ticketed at a penny to ninepence a pair. The other counter is given over entirely to men's clothing; there you may pick your waistcoats at a shilling each and under, and treat yourself to a whole suit for three half-crowns. Stalls down the centre of the floor display a dazzling array of neckties, braces, hosiery, window-curtains, all ticketed at absurdly low prices; one is stacked exclusively with hats—straws, bowlers, soft felts, cricket and tennis caps, "toppers," even an academical mortar-board—at a penny apiece. At the lower end of the room rises a confusion of books, chimney ornaments, oil-lamps, a

fender, a baby's cradle, and a jumble of odd furniture.

The preaching platform, at the upper end, bristles with ladies' hats and jackets, variously trimmed, an iron bedstead, rugs, mats, a chaos of bedding, and a refreshment stall, where tea can be had at a ha'penny a cup and cake at ditto the slice.

No sooner does the clock on the wall point to 7.30 than the attendants discontinue their babble of airy talk and grow solemn behind their stalls. Somebody calls "Time!" and "Let them in!" Then there is a swelling rumble of ascending feet, and a seething, living, human tide immediately fills the well of the doorless staircase and overflows into the room.

All the first-comers are women, shabby, anxious, many of them old; some alone; some dragging or carrying eager and bewildered children. Struggling in the wake of the first wild rush come men and boys; more women, and more, and more; then a lessening dribble of stragglers, who have arrived late and are heated with running, or are asthmatical as well as old, and have had to mount the long stairs by easy stages. As their heads rise above

the floor level the men crane and peer for the tailoring counter ; they make straight for it, pulling off coats and waistcoats as they go. They drop these garments, snatch others from the stall, and whirling through a series of swift and frantic contortions, appear for successive moments in long coats, short coats, light coats, dark coats, loose coats, tight coats, overcoats, waistcoats, till each is fitted to his fancy. They work with such gusto, elbowing and racing for a first choice, that one momentarily expects to see them bare their legs in a flash and start trying on trousers. Apparently, however, they are contented to measure these against their outward persons, estimating lengths and girths, and leaving the rest to providence. Some have their wives with them, to hold their coats and help them through the trying-on ordeal and stand in judgment over them ; other wives are alone and feverishly busy with inch-tapes, measuring and buying for sons and husbands at home or at work.

Directly a man is suited at the tailoring counter, he makes a dash for the boot stall, squats on the floor, and begins furiously trying on boots ; all the while, at this as at every other stall, swarms of women pull and push and

crush each other and select excitedly, and the argus-eyed attendants direct, advise, perspire and take money with both hands.

You realise presently why so many customers have brought children with them. Perched on spare forms in out-of-the-way nooks, these youngsters may be discovered trying to hug the growing stores of bargains that are dumped on their small knees, the father or mother darting round intermittently to add fresh articles until, the child gradually disappearing behind it as the pile rises, nothing much remains visible on the forms but so many heaps of cloth, flannel, linen and household odds and ends with a hand clutching over the top and round one side and diminutive socked or stockinged legs dangling below.

One man—he is not the only one—has wisely brought a sack with him, and when it is bulging unwieldily and grown too heavy, he grasps a quick-eyed little girl who has been closely following him, hustles her off to a quietish corner, seats her there on the sack, and dives back into the crowd and is instantly swallowed from sight. He comes to the surface a minute later with his hands full of boots, tries them on the child at express speed, crams a selection

into the sack, dives back again with the remainder, and subsequently reappears, vanishes, and reappears, repeatedly, with collars, bonnets, braces, socks, stockings, a carpet, hats, mats, curtains, and underclothing enough for a large family; later he is met careering amid the throng with a zinc bath under his arm and a pair of carpet slippers in a bird-cage.

The air is hazier now with constant additions of fog from outside and dust from within, and everybody's face is warm and grimy, and fast becoming more so. Here one is chilled, perhaps, by the wan, wistful visage of a sickly-looking man who loiters listlessly, carrying the purchases of his bustling, assertive wife; there one shares the disappointment of a careworn mother who hesitatingly passes over a smart dress for herself, at two-and-six, in favour of a very small dress at a shilling, three diminutive woollen skirts, and some shoes and a bonnet for the baby; and all about the place in plenty are dejected men and women who keep a tight hand on their scanty supply of coppers and buy ravenously, as starved dogs eat; nevertheless, there is a constant ripple of chaff and laughter frothing among the majority and the

general effect of the huge multitude is good-humoured and lively.

One customer, a hulking young man who will never be more than a boy, slouches idly with his mouth open, eyes staring widely, and an expression of slow joy mantling his witless features. He seems to be pretty generally known; every now and then somebody, in passing, slaps his shoulder and hails him boisterously; he stops and gazes round, a sluggish gratification simmering in his face, but before he can single out who accosted him, he is similarly greeted from the other side, or caught up in an eddy of the crowd and carried to a distance. Drifting to the hat stall, he holds on there spell-bound and is blankly interested in those who are trying on hats; is even fascinated into trying some on himself, and works his way along from straws to cricket caps, then to the "toppers," and at length stands grinning delightedly under the scholastic mortar-board. But at this juncture he is pounced upon from the rear by a hot, plump female in a plaid shawl, evidently his mother. "Where've you bin, George?" she cries distractedly. "I bin huntin' all rhand the room for yer. Come on, yer silly young fool, afore all the best's gorn—

come on!" She abruptly divests him of the mortar-board, jerks him headlong to the tailoring stall, whips off his coat and waistcoat as unceremoniously as she would peel an onion, and in a very few minutes has fitted him with a suit, reclothed and cast him loose again.

But the bustle and excitement are subsiding; business begins to languish; quietness and a sense of exhaustion are stealing over everything and everybody.

Some man has bought the bedstead; it is carried downstairs for him by a friend, and he follows it, half invisible, beneath the swelling curves of a feather bed, like Atlas departing with the world. Tired women are flocking round the refreshment table, munching cake and congratulating themselves and one another over steaming cups of tea.

Prices were low enough at first, but they have fallen much lower now and are still falling. One attendant, in an access of despair, is hawking the last of the hats and offering them at four a penny; you may have whatever you like for almost as little as you choose to give; but buyers and purses are alike exhausted, and those who are not already gone or going are making ready to go.

"No, marm," says one old crone to another, hugging a mighty eighteenpenn'orth of all sorts in both arms, and heading for the stairs, "I ain't got nearly all I wanted, nor nothing like it. You'd orter have a plenty of money when you comes to these here places, don't yer?—but them as 'ave got plenty are just them as haven't got sense to come, so there you are!"

VI

THE TRUTH ABOUT SPORT

SHAKESPEARE knew most things, but he made a good many mistakes. I dare say he felt he was saying a deep thing when he asked lightly, "What's in a name?" for example, but he did not know how to spell his own, and one result of his doing it with an x is that very learned people assume he was ignorant, and that Bacon (who is known to have been to school, and was never so careless as to spell his name with a k) must have written his plays for him.

If Shakespeare had thought twice he would have known that there is generally more in the name than there is in the thing itself. Call trade sport, and give gold cups and championship belts to the man who sells the largest number of shirts or neckties over the counter, and business would become a pastime at once. On the other hand, if sport had been named business, and the players received a trade union

rate of wages, many an enthusiastic sportsman would realise that he is working too hard, and go away for a rest-cure.

No doubt it is my misfortune, and I ought to be ashamed of myself and expect I shall be, one of these days ; but somehow, if I could not get in free, or pay at a gate, to see others do my sporting for me, I would sooner not have any. Every spring and summer I read those scathing observations in the newspapers about degenerate people who lounge around looking on at cricket matches ; and during the rest of the year I read the other and equally scathing letters and articles about spectators at football matches, and I confess I can't understand them. I am beginning to suspect that they are intended to be humorous—all that sort of writing is a manifestation of a newer new humour, and as soon as we get used to it and are able to see the joke, I am hoping it will make us laugh quite heartily.

Mind you, I do not dislike cricket ; far from it. I enjoy the reports in the papers ; I am proud when England hits the ball triumphantly and beats Australia ; I am intrigued when I read that some famous player has been caught in the slips—it seems to suggest that even the

greatest of us is very human and liable to err ; and I am delighted when it is announced in large type on a placard that one of the bowlers has done the hat-trick, because, though I don't know what it means, it sounds dexterous and amusing. Now and then I go to Lord's or the Oval as a spectator, and I am, in short, so far taken with the game that if I were a millionaire and had plenty of spare ground I should most likely have a pitch made and keep two sets of cricketers of my own, instead of a gramophone or a pianola.

I was chatting with a professional cricketer the other day and he complained that he felt absolutely done up before the end of the season; he assured me that his was a terribly hard job and he fully anticipated that he would be worn out and too old at forty. And what else could anyone expect ? I have frequently thought, watching the fielders standing about on the grass, if they happened to be clerks who were kept standing like that at their desks all day, they would grumble and form leagues and go on strike till the firm supplied them with seats of some sort ; and there really is no reason why a cricketer in the field should not have a chair or a camp-stool and be allowed

to sit down while he is waiting until the ball is knocked in his direction.

Even the umpire is kept on his legs all the time. He might just as well be swinging comfortably near by in a hammock, with opera-glasses, or curled up out of the way on a rug behind the wickets. I strongly object to working when I am only playing, but cricketers don't; and as a consequence they are played out and done up before they reach middle age, journalists refer to them as veteran players, and they have to have a benefit match and retire; and whilst you are still wondering whether they have died at forty odd under the impression that they were old men, you come across them spending the evening of their days in teaching boys how to play, or wrapped up in flannel and being wheeled about in Bath chairs at a health resort. It takes sixty years of what is known as hard work to reduce most of us to such a condition as that.

"Why do you do it?" I asked that cricketer who complained to me. "If you must play, what's the matter with draughts, or noughts and crosses? They are entertaining and don't call for any over-exertion. If there is something in the style of cricket that attracts you,

why not adopt carpet-beating as your profession ? " I argued. " It has the advantage of being useful ; you might have the stick shaped like a bat, if that would seem more satisfactory to you, and you would only have to stand and hit hard and it would be like standing at the wickets flogging the ball and getting boundaries continuously. At the same time, you would be cleaning the carpet."

I did not pursue the point ; he did not see eye to eye with me and began to say things that I do not think any man ought to say out loud. He declared, in effect, that I was no sportsman ; and I suppose he may have been right.

When I see twenty or thirty grown-up persons, with a large pack of dogs, riding eagerly and at the risk of their necks, all after one small fox, and when I reflect that even if the dogs catch it for them there won't be a mouthful each to go round, I wonder why they did not stop cosily at home and send the girl out for a tinned lobster or half a pound of ham. Take the case of my doctor, too. He spends his leisure lurking about and getting hot and dirty in some woods near where I live, because he likes to play at shooting rabbits ; but I must

say he seems to share my objection to making a labour of his sport. He overtook me on the road one afternoon and urged me, as a friend, and yet rather resentfully, not to allow my two dogs to be out of doors by themselves. He said that on several occasions lately they had gone into the woods and roused and scattered the game there. I apologised for them, but remarked that I imagined most sportsmen would be pleased to have them do this, since it would keep the birds and animals on the move and make it harder and more exciting to catch or shoot them, but I gathered from his words and manner that I was under a misapprehension, and it gratified me to find a lover of sport after my own heart.

"You're like me, I see, you prefer to have your sport made easy," I said. "You don't want to have the game kept running about so that you have to actually hunt after it and get into a perspiration. You hate it to be disturbed. You would sooner have the rabbit sit perfectly still and not notice you till you were close enough to put your gun to its ear and blow its head off."

And I proceeded to lay before him an easier and less troublesome way even than that. I

advised him to bring his man out with him, and let his man run after the rabbit and catch it with a piece of string that had a slip-knot on it; then he could make it sit up and hold it quite still while his master shot at it. But though we apparently held a common opinion that sport ought not to be rendered difficult, he did not receive my suggestions courteously. He received them so discourteously, in fact, that as I was not certain whether his gun was loaded I did not stop to hear all he had to say.

It seems just as absurd to me that a man should worry and fag at boating when he can take a penny steamer, where they keep a paid staff downstairs among the machinery doing all the work and leaving him free to have all the enjoyment; and I should not care to play golf unless after every stroke I could get into a bus or tram and be carried round after the ball. The only easy sport that has been invented so far is, I believe, fishing, and that does not tempt me. Judging from observation, I should say it is too tediously tame. It does not look to me to be so exciting even as knitting, or darning socks.

There is a river at no great distance from my

house, and a canal close to the river, and people are always to be found fishing in both. I have seen the same men in the same places Sunday after Sunday, looking as if they had not been home all the week and were feeling hungry. I used to try to be friendly with them, and would nod cheerfully and ask if they had caught anything, but they usually resented my enquiry with such menacing glances that I had to give it up. Now, I merely pause, in passing, to scrutinise the grass round where they are standing or sitting, but there is hardly ever anything to be seen there except empty fishing tins and large nets ; and occasionally if they happen to turn their heads and detect my curiosity, they meet my sympathetic gaze so coldly that I think it may be wiser if I give this up also.

Probably they find my attention rather aggravating ; but why they continue to go on like that I don't know. I am sure they wouldn't if it had not been named sport. Why, many a man like them has, to my knowledge, gone a two-shilling railway journey, bought a shilling fishing-ticket, and sat all day on the banks of a lake or river, playing with a five-shilling rod and eighteenpenn'orth of bait, and then come home late at night, tired and wet through,

without so much as a tiddler for his money ; whereas he could have procured what he wanted for sixpence, without any trouble at all, by simply sending somebody round the corner to the fishmonger's.

VII

THE GOSPEL OF SUCCESS

If you were to take the word of some men you would be forced to conclude that the world is divided into people who have succeeded and people who deserve to succeed. But you do not take the word of men who talk like that because you learn, sooner or later, that they have been unsuccessful themselves and this shakes your confidence in them. You cannot feel perfectly convinced that the man who has never lifted more than one foot at a time off the earth is to be accepted as a sound authority on aeronautics. He may make light of the aeronaut's accomplishments, and say that he did nothing more than sit in a suitable machine, pull certain levers, and give himself to the winds, and that he triumphed mainly because they favoured him; but somehow you cannot away with a sneaking notion that probably the victorious aeronaut is entitled to a little credit, in the first place for manufacturing or other-

wise acquiring a vehicle so nicely suited to his requirements and so actually navigable, and that, at all events, he did something to earn his reward by being careful to set out when wind and weather were propitious, instead of recklessly launching towards his goal in the teeth of fatal breezes that were towing a thundercloud over the horizon and would presently blow such a gale as must inevitably hurl him headlong to destruction.

This contempt of the man who has failed for the man who succeeds proves no more than that the man who fails thinks he ought to have been successful. But you cannot make bricks with flour and water, nor mend a suit of clothes with a hammer and tintacks, and those of us who can stand outside the world occasionally and look critically on at it know that when a man fails it is usually because he did not adopt the right means to the end he desired to attain.

> "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
> But in ourselves."

In life, as in every other game, there are certain moves or strokes to be mastered, certain rules to be closely observed, and it is only by mastering and observing these that a player

can expect or deserve to win. If you play cricket with the bat wrong way round, or are inattentive enough to put your leg before the wicket, you have no reason to blame anybody but yourself if you are soon out and end the match with nothing to your score but a couple of duck's eggs. Whatever game you enter yourself for, if you do not conform to its known laws and will not study to play it efficiently, obviously no amount of energy or perseverance can save you from losing at last.

Hence you may write it down as the truest of axioms that only the man who succeeds deserves to ; and this in a nutshell is the great Gospel of Success. Most successful men believe it openly, and all of them believe it in their hearts. The sceptics are all among the crowd who have failed ; but even their unorthodoxy is very superficial and a little success of their own converts them at once.

It was the shallowest sophistry in Addison to write :

> "'Tis not in mortals to command success,
> But we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it" ;

for you cannot do more than succeed, in such a world as this, and if he did not write those lines with his tongue in his cheek he was not

so wise a man as we have thought him. You may depend upon it that if Sempronius took him seriously he turned out a failure of the worst kind, and the amount of satisfaction he derived from persuading himself that to deserve success was better than to obtain it was not sufficiently filling to prevent him from feeling hungry.

The fatal mistake of many men is that though they want to succeed they want to do it in the way that pleases themselves; and the very essence of success lies, of course, in pleasing others. This is, indeed, the secret of success, and, as with most secrets, everybody knows it.

Books written with a moral purpose will not hesitate to recommend honest industry as the one and only Open Sesame to honour and glory and all the treasure of the earth. But you will notice that the majority of those men who die of overwork are unimportant persons and leave nothing behind them but debts. More often than not, being too scrupulous to take advantage of his opportunities, or, rather, to take advantage of others who do not hesitate to take advantage of him, the strenuous, honest plodder is constrained at length to withdraw into the workhouse and eke out the inade-

quacies of his hard fare with the cold comfort of a clear conscience. Every failure considers he has deserved success, but no Sempronius of them all will tell you, if he speaks the truth, that he feels it is better to have deserved it than to have got it.

So far as one may judge from the homage and respect accorded to him by the world at large, it is only the successful man who has kept all the ten commandments, and, judging again by his treatment, that the man who fails has broken the most important of them, though "Thou shalt not fail" has been unaccountably omitted from the decalogue as it is read in churches. The successful rebel proclaims himself President of the new Republic, and thereafter kings will shake hands with him and are not ashamed to be seen dining with him in public. But let him fail—and he is no better than any other criminal who murders and robs, and his just reward is the gallows. The bomb-throwing anarchist of to-day is a ruthless and despicable monster: we depict him with villainous, fierce-fanged jaws, unkempt hair, merciless, bloodshot eyes, and we denounce him with horror. If ever he is absolutely successful, however, we shall tearfully

refer to him as the saviour of his country, the noble champion of the oppressed, and our artists will draw or paint him wearing his hair nicely parted in the middle, all his teeth inside his face, and a beautiful, benevolent smile outside. Success, like charity, covers a multitude of sins ; it transfigures a disreputable past and makes the owner of it entirely respectable.

You may regard it as unfair that one company promoter, for example, is allowed to march in a gorgeous and triumphal procession to his goal in Park Lane, while another is sternly intercepted midway in his similar, sensational career and forcibly diverted to a cell in Parkhurst. You may think it a cruel irony of Fate that the blameless tradesman who devotes his talents to selling a good, durable, all-wool article at a reasonable profit should gravitate to the Bankruptcy Court, while the smart shopman who baits his windows with showier but shoddy articles at less than half the money should drive a roaring trade, have to enlarge his premises, grow wealthy enough to contribute generously to the funds of his political party, and be honoured with baronetcy. You may wax indignant because this author,

having written a new "Paradise Lost," starves in a garret, while that one, who has produced nothing but another and more commonplace "Proverbial Philosophy," is selling his tens of thousands and being interviewed and photographed and puffed into a profitable popularity. But there is nothing to wonder at or to complain of in either case.

These and other such men are all playing the same game, but they do not all know how to play it. The company promoter who failed did some little thing in a way that the laws of the game prohibit; the one who succeeded did precisely the same thing, but he was careful to do it in the right way. They both handled the same bat, as it were, and hit at the same ball, but one of them was so rash as to put his leg before the wicket, and of course the umpire ended his innings at once. The tradesman and the author who failed had not even an elementary acquaintance with the taste of the people on whose patronage the fulfilment of their hopes depended; instead of seeking to minister to the needs and ideals of the public they thought only of satisfying unappreciated ideals of their own; and naturally the public will not pay anyone for doing that. The success-

ful tradesman and the successful author played a strictly scientific game with ripe intelligence, and that is why they won. They knew the world prefers what is showy and cheap to what is unpretentiously excellent but more expensive; that it does not care so much whether a thing is good if only it looks good; and that it wants a lot for its money.

In a word, any man who yearns for success can have it; he has merely to find what the public wants and go on giving it nothing but that. You cannot grow a crop of onions by planting turnips; and you will never get admiration or hard cash from mankind by blindly laying yourself out to supply it with something it does not require.

Once upon a time, I was personally acquainted with Sempronius and respected him, within limits, as we respect any man who does not get in our way; but eventually he became a burden on the rates in the parish where I am a ratepayer. He moved into my neighbourhood, which is a very select and genteel suburb, and opened an inferior establishment for the sale of fried fish and chip potatoes. But we do not eat that sort of delicacy round our way; we consider we are a cut above that. I am

prepared to believe that it was the finest fish in the trade, and that Sempronius cooked it to a nicety with an art that left nothing to be desired—except customers. He could not attract nearly enough of them to make his business pay. My private impression is that he sat at the back of the shop and at intervals ate the fish and potatoes himself to prevent them from going cold, and I fancy this preyed upon his mind and made him cynical. "Here's as tasty a bit of fish as you can buy anywhere in London, done to a turn with a skill that no chef in a high-class hotel could surpass, and yet people go past my door and neither the sight of it nor the smell of it can tempt them to come inside and patronise me."

He had got the right stuff if he had gone into the right neighbourhood; but he had come into the wrong one and so foredoomed himself to ruin. He could no more understand why he was neglected and could not earn a living than the poet can who persistently offers poetry to a public that is not taking any, or than an artist can who attempts to maintain himself by the exquisite work of his hands in a world that is thoroughly contented with something in the way of pictures that is less expensive and more

highly coloured and made very nicely by machinery.

Whether you owe your rise in the world to an accident of birth and the backing of an influential family, or to a lucky chance, or to your own deliberate, painstaking sagacity, the result is very much the same in money, power, glory, or a blend of all three. Invent a new pill, discover a new star, paint an immortal picture, compose a deathless epic, win a fortune on the turf—it is all one so that the trick is done successfully: the rest of us judge you by your success, not by the means of its achievement. Once you are safely in the City of the Blest, the fact that you have arrived is all that counts; nobody—except the envious who are still outside and therefore do not matter—nobody is concerned to know by which route you travelled, and whether you came on horseback or afoot, whether you entered by the front door or dodged in over the back wall. This man mounted to the Upper House by governing the Empire, that by brewing beer, but the one is every bit as much a lord as the other.

I do not suggest that success is the only thing worth having; there are other things, and

higher ; but I do say that it is the one thing we are all after, and few of us can be happy till we get it—and then we shall not be happy !

It is not essentially a reward of merit, yet so little faith have we in our personal judgments that we rarely recognise merit in our friends until they have attained success. It is the medal that one may win and wear proudly either for saving a life or for simply being a teetotaler. It is the pearl that the exhausted diver brings up from the deeps with infinite peril and labour ; it is the dross lost by some snivelling bungler and covertly raked in from the gutter by the smart financier who, after washing his hands, uses it to pay for his admission into the best circles. It is the applause and profit that you can rely upon receiving if only you will leave off playing the piano perfectly with your fingers and learn how to do it with your toes ; the golden harvest alike of him who fasts for a month and of him who eats a whole leg of mutton at a sitting.

Nevertheless, there are men of intellect and earnestness who give their days and nights to scientific research, to medicine, to a self-sacrificing political career, or to some useful, unostentatious business, and then feel hurt and

disappointed when they are not applauded and rewarded as those spangled mountebanks and freak performers are. They have no reason to be disappointed. Anyone who will may succeed, as I say, just as anyone may pick up pebbles by stooping in the places where they lie; wherefore it follows, according to the Gospel of Success, that all of us who succeed have deserved to—and it serves us right. I will not deny, if it is any satisfaction to Sempronius, that it is a greater, a nobler, a more difficult thing to deserve not to succeed, yet I have met accomplished creatures who have done that and got their deserts, and are still as discontented as if they had been successful.

You have succeeded in life if you have lived happily, and you have failed if you have done nothing but succeed in the ordinary sense of the term. I was shocked a little while ago to read in the papers interviews with two well-known, affluent men who preached a strong and soulless Gospel of Work as the one recipe for success. For my part, I would as soon preach a gospel of drink, for the one form of intemperance is, in effect, no worse than the other. One of the well-known two, who is a multi-millionaire, says he often works for three

days and nights without sleep, then goes to bed, sleeps for twenty-four hours, and gets up to go on working again, and so forth. The other, who is likewise more than rich enough, says pretty much the same, and both agree that they never need holidays and find all their pleasure in such slavery.

If I used my life so I should be ashamed to talk about it. Here am I, lord of a world that is made variously beautiful throughout the year by the wizardries of the four seasons and the changing influences of sun and rain, and I am asked to believe that it were a virtue in me to turn my back upon it and devote my days and nights to grubbing squalidly in a stuffy workshop for the sake of accumulating thousands of discs of metal that are intrinsically worthless. When a man has earned enough to live upon in moderate comfort, let him cleanse his soiled palms and leave his petty schemings, his mean drudgery, and go out and see some dawn of spring laying its shining hand on the dead earth and bidding it rise and live again, or some still night after storm when the very puddles in the mud are dreaming of heaven, so that the stars may be seen glimmering in the depths of them. If the looking on these

things does not waken his soul, he has no soul to save. Work is good within reason, as rest is, and as drink and food are; but when a man lives to work instead of merely working to live, he has made such a failure of his life and is so dead to all the loveliness of the world that he might just as well be dead to all its ugliness also, and decently buried.

VIII

A GENTLEMAN OF THE PRESS

"Among the applications for 'leave to presume death' in the 'Stella' disaster was one that was exceptionally touching in its revelation of a deed of heroism. The applicant was a Miss B——, whose father, a Major, had gone down with the vessel. Both were about to perish when the father made a piteous appeal to a boatload of passengers to find room for his daughter. One man, of whose identity there is no trace, instantly stepped back on to the ship and allowed the lady to take his place. As the boat cleared the side, the vessel went down, carrying with it the girl's father and her unknown rescuer."

I

I CAME across that newspaper cutting yesterday in an old pocket-book of mine, and it carried my thoughts back at once to the days when I was just beginning to be a journalist and made acquaintance, for the first time, with an editor in the flesh.

When I first met Philip Howard, he was about forty, and I was still in my teens; we were both pursuing glory, but he wanted his with a satisfactory alloy of hard cash, and I was young enough to be less practical.

Our meeting happened in this wise. At that date I was combining work in a lawyer's office with experiments in literature, and sent some humorous verses to the first number of a much-heralded Manchester comic paper. They were promptly accepted, and Howard, as editor and proprietor, invited me to contribute regularly. When the journal was a few weeks old, he wrote saying he was moving up to London, and must see me at his new office in the Strand next day :

" All my staff have deserted me, except the cartoonist," he wrote bitterly, " and I look to you to throw yourself in the breach."

So I went, and did so—or it might be more correct to say that he threw me in and rushed in after me, hustling the cartoonist. He was a dark, alert man, consumed with a constant fever of impatience. Rushing me upstairs before we had exchanged a dozen words, he introduced me to the cartoonist, a perspiring, bewildered young man, who was smoking a pipe and sketching desperately in an almost empty room. " I say—this left leg's too short!" shouted Howard, scanning the political cartoon that stood finished on an easel whilst the worried artist was shaking hands with me.

"And not enough detail. Give Randy a cocked hat, and let him be trailing a wooden horse behind him labelled 'Balfour.'" He suggested other amendments without standing still for a moment, then swept downstairs again, carrying me with him.

Restless, tireless, opinionated, capable, he fully believed in himself and was curtly intolerant of incapacity in others. He never asked me if I could do what he required, but would simply tell me to do it, taking for granted that I could, so that I formed a wholesome habit of taking it for granted too, and doing it. He and I and the artist pretty well filled the paper between us while he was reconstructing his staff, and he complained clamorously that he was working himself to death and being harassed out of his senses by the police, entirely for the benefit of an imbecile public that could not be made to recognise that our paper had eclipsed "Punch." But I was not slow to realise that he could not be happy in quieter circumstances; he loved to feel that he was standing right in the limelight, creating sensations, attracting attention and being applauded or howled at all the time.

His trouble with the police was that, to

advertise the journal, he sprinkled the streets with sandwich men dressed in judicial wigs and gowns, and these men were continually being arrested or summoned for causing obstructions. After writing humorous notes most of the morning, disposing of his correspondence, racing through yards of proofs, interviewing callers, radiating ideas for cartoons and comic drawings, quarrelling with the publisher down in the shop, and indignantly repulsing inconsiderate persons who attempted to collect accounts before he was ready to pay them, he would whirl off, north, south, east or west, meet his lawyer at the police-court, personally superintend the defence of one of his "judges," ostentatiously pay the man's fine, with a keen eye on its value as an advertisement, look out for reports of the case and be righteously exasperated if they were too brief.

II

"You put in your bill at the end of the quarter," he said gloriously, when I hinted that my own services had not yet received any financial acknowledgment. But when I did put it in it brought nothing out, and by the

end of the next quarter there was nothing left to put it into.

In his fiery, headlong fashion, Howard sent round uncompromising notices to the effect that owing entirely to the scandalous rapacity of his creditors the paper was dead; and he appointed a meeting at which he would make a frank statement of the state of his affairs for the behoof of all whom they might concern.

I attended that meeting. He asked me to, because he said he knew I would support him. It overflowed the editorial room, for there were at least a score of gloomy creditors, stolid men of business, several of them accompanied by their lawyers. Howard rose at the end of the table, his long, sallow, black-bearded face severely set, his sharp black eyes alive and alert, and I knew it gave him a thrill to feel that he was the centre of attraction, the cause of this portentous gathering. He began slowly, impressively, in short, snappy sentences:

"I have made nothing out of this business myself," he went on. "I have lived on a glass of milk and a scone. I have starved, and often camped out on the floor of this office of a night, like a soldier on a campaign."

As he proceeded he warmed up, and waxed

angry. He declared that his creditors were responsible for his failure; charged the paper manufacturer with supplying inferior paper; asserted that the printer and the engraver had purposely wrecked him by never getting their work done to time; levelled an accusing finger at the publisher, and ended by pointing out one dastardly creditor who had recently called whilst he was in the next room, washing his hands, and had departed with his diamond ring and gold sleeve links. "I left them here, on this table, while I went to have a wash, and when I came back they were gone. That man had taken them," he thundered, keeping one finger stiffened towards the culprit as if it were a revolver and he was aiming to shoot, "and he had the impertinence to send me the pawn tickets! He had pawned them, gentlemen, and appropriated the money on account of his paltry bill. That's what I have had to put up with. That's the kind of treatment I have had to endure. Robbed of my personal property and then insulted with the pawn ticket!" And he honestly appeared to consider that this incident explained why he was without assets and unable to offer even a penny in the pound.

It certainly seemed an inadequate end to a

very long speech, and the creditors did not dissemble their annoyance. They felt that they had come themselves and brought their solicitors to no purpose, and they talked uproariously about it in unison, Howard talking resolutely against them and furiously contradicting as much as he could hear. The meeting broke up in confusion, the creditors trampling heavily after one another downstairs, protesting stormily as they went.

"You shall be all right," said Howard, rolling another cigarette and turning to me, when we were alone. "I'll see that you lose nothing. What did you think of my speech?" He was obviously pleased with himself, and was too excitedly in earnest at the moment to appreciate the humour of such a useless meeting. There was a dashing, self-justifying egotism about the man that to me was more amusing than irritating, and I suppose I was inexperienced and impressionable; anyhow, my sympathies were all with him, and I was glad to see that he was in no wise down-hearted.

Unmarried, living a bohemian, rather friendless life, he could easily vanish and cover up his tracks; and for four years from that day he was undiscoverable.

Then he reappeared to me in Walbrook. He was careering along at his customary flying walk, and the only change in his outward aspect was that he wore blue spectacles.

"Hullo! I've been looking for you!" he pounced on me instantly. "I owe you some money."

I did not deny it.

"I've arranged all my old affairs—I never like owing anybody anything. Send me your bill," he cried. "Call and see me, day after to-morrow. I want you to do some work for me."

He had a considerable staff, I found, and an imposing suite of offices in Queen Victoria Street, and was editing and publishing three trade journals devoted respectively to the tobacco, fruit and confectionery industries.

"I say," he greeted me, when I entered his private room, "I had no idea I owed you all this bill you have sent me. Cut it in halves, and we'll square up right here and now."

I cut it, and put my half in my pocket.

"Now we start a new volume of the confectionery journal next month," he continued, getting straightway to business. "I want you to do me an introductory poem, and I've got a

picture of a watchman that will do to illustrate it. So you'll have to pull him into it somehow. See ? "

I knew nothing of confectionery; but I knew him too well to imagine that he would regard that as an excuse for declining his commission.

" Any particular facts about confectionery," I enquired, fishing cautiously, " that you would like the poem to lay stress on ? "

" Give us full credit," he said thoughtfully, " for all the good we have done the trade in the past year. Don't forget that we claim to have abolished the clumsy old rule of thumb, in measuring ingredients, in favour of weights and scales."

For five minutes he immersed me in a torrent of similar uninspiring suggestions; then I went away and wrote the poem without understanding it, and he published it with the watchman, and praised it as self-consciously as if he had done it all himself.

In his excitable fashion he would write to me once or twice a week giving or reiterating instructions. Frequently he disturbed me with cryptic telegrams, and it was when I called once in response to one vague but urgent

message that he took me aback by roaring, without any prelude :

" I must have a stinging poem for the Fruit journal on the Bloodsucker. I must have it without fail by to-morrow."

I snatched at a thought of blood-oranges, but it led nowhere, so I enquired earnestly :

" What *is* the Bloodsucker ? "

" Good Lord ! Don't you read the journal?" he protested impatiently. " The Bloodsucker !—why, even the office-boy knows who he is ! "

He plunged into lurid explanations, from which I gathered dimly that the Bloodsucker was some sort of a superfluous middle-man who preyed on wholesaler and retailer alike, and that the time had come to make an end of him.

" I'm pulverising him in my leaders," he shouted, " and now you've got to back me with the hottest stuff in poetry that you can turn out."

To this hour I am not quite clear in my own mind as to who or what the Bloodsucker was, but I attacked him savagely in terms that were discreetly indefinite ; with such happy results that further poems about him were demanded and a day came when Howard wired to me

exultantly: "Between us we have wiped out the Bloodsucker. Send me a pæan of victory by to-morrow morning."

Thus it came to pass that the next number electrified the vegetable world with "Who Killed the Bloodsucker?" a poem which is, I may hope, too well known in the fruit trade to need more than a passing reference here.

I invoked the Muse freely on behalf of the same periodical, and added a fresh laurel to my brow by grappling successfully with an acute crisis in the nut trade; and the tobacco journal made a steady demand upon me for stories as well as poems, all of a technical character—the one thing needful being that pipes, tobacco or snuff should some way be involved in them.

Throughout this busy period Howard was perpetually involved in legal squabbles. Old creditors were suing him; he was suing rebellious advertisers who were sceptical concerning his guaranteed circulations; and as he was all the while raging up and down the columns of his three journals breathing flagrant libels as naturally as a dragon breathes fire, he was never through with one law suit before another had commenced.

His tactics in the witness-box at these trials were rather scientific. He posed wearily, his long, sallow visage and blue spectacles suggesting the delicate student; and, with a view to melting the jury and making the ridicule he anticipated from the plaintiff's counsel seem merely brutal, he would turn aside to the judge, before his cross-examination, and say pensively:

"My lord, I have been in weak health lately. Will you kindly permit me to sit down?"

When he had been sympathetically accommodated with a chair in the box, he would faintly request the usher for water, and afterwards sip at the glass, which he kept on the ledge before him, whenever he required leisure for reflection before answering some ticklish question. These legal crises invariably braced him to this unflurried self-possession, and his habitual haste and excitement seemed to fall from him without any effort on his part to get rid of them. Normally he was the most erratic, headlong and irrepressible of men; but put him in a tight corner and he had himself at once under control and was as calm and deliberate as if he had not a nerve in his body.

The ridicule that experience had taught him

to expect, when he was subjected to cross-examination, arose out of the circumstance that he had assumed the title of "Dr." and printed his name on his noteheading and on the faces of his journals with a procession of initials after it that tailed into a second line. This degree and most of the initials were of American origin; they were only matters of purchase, and he would acknowledge this with a gentle surprise that everybody was not aware of it. His libels were consistently unjustifiable, but the damages awarded against him were always small, and he ascribed this, not without complacency, to his masterly precautions in the witness-box.

III

He made a good deal of money out of his trade journals, but before long he wearied of them, sold them, and with the proceeds founded a weekly comic paper for smokers. It was a penny publication filled with stories, verses, pictures, and articles dealing exclusively with smoking and smoking accessories. He pushed it with his usual energy and confidence, but it would not go; within three months, having swallowed most of his capital,

it died suddenly, and he disappeared again, hotly pursued by his creditors.

Before disappearing, however, he sought to ingratiate himself with the man who had purchased his trade papers and, friendlier overtures failing, eventually interviewed him with a revolver. It had struck him that he had rashly sold those journals of his too cheaply and ought either to be compensated with an additional payment or engaged as editor of one of them. As the new proprietor remained unamenable to this argument, Howard burst in on him one morning with the revolver, and though he did not actually shoot anyone the interview was so much out of the common and so disquieting that there was a sequel to it at the Mansion House police-court, where he was bound over to keep the peace.

Two years elapsed before I saw him again; then, one Saturday afternoon he swooped upon me unexpectedly in Farringdon Street. He had established a small printing business in South London, he informed me, and, bubbling over with a great project for reviving his comic weekly for smokers, he issued peremptory orders for me to get six tobacco stories ready for it forthwith. He discussed his arrangements

with unabated enthusiasm over some light refreshment in a tavern at the corner of Charterhouse Street, shook hands with his old native gusto, and rushed off, as usual, as if he had not a moment to spare.

. . . I never saw him again.

He was that man who gave up his seat in the boat, a week or two later, and went down in the "Stella." I saw his name in the lists of the drowned, and it was strange to think of him as I had known him, and to read how his body had been washed ashore near a far-off French fishing village, where a simple old priest and his kindly people laid it reverently in their bleak little chapel till such friends as he had here could bring it home for burial.

Then, when the editor of a weekly paper, to which he had been a regular contributor for many years, went collecting material for an obituary notice and interviewed some of the "Stella's" survivors, the man he described to them—sallow-faced, with a short, pointed black beard and blue glasses—was commonly recognised as the unknown who had given his chance of safety away to another.

It was like him, after all, to be so recklessly impetuous; it was like him, too, to be in-

spired with such coolness and indomitable pluck at a crisis; but it was not like him to be in a difficulty that he could not get out of. I am convinced that he climbed back on to the ship with a buoyant conviction in his mind that he should manage to escape right enough somehow; he was so masterful, so unfailingly resourceful, so intensely alive that I find it impossible even yet to imagine him lying beaten and very quiet, and that Fleet Street will know him no more.

IX

A GARDEN IN THE EAST

Some two miles east of Aldgate Pump is a plot of ground that was aforetime a weedy and disused churchyard; nowadays it has undergone a miraculous transition, and, rising dazzlingly from its old cocoon of death, bourgeons and spreads, an ordered, pleasant garden, bright, many-hued, and as strange to its dismal environment as a butterfly that has gone astray in the sombre ways of town. One of its iron gates opens on the noisy main road, and one on a squalid side street that slopes sinuously towards the river nearly half a mile away. All about its walls welters a populous, poverty-cursed neighbourhood, a blighted wilderness of grimy streets and noisome alleys, where swarms of ill-clad, ill-nourished, dirty children play boisterously in the gutters and narrow cart-ways, and, slinking among the patient, poor, decent toilers that throng everywhere, evil faces

and sinister figures of strangely dehumanised creatures, male and female, haunt the day like obscene ghosts that have escaped and risen out of their due time from limboes of unimaginable nights.

In the thick of all this teeming sin and wretchedness lies the garden that was once a churchyard. To-day the streets around it are baking under the glare of a merciless sun; whenever the air is stirred it breathes upon you like an almost suffocating blast from an oven that has been suddenly opened. Horses plod languidly, with drooping heads and distended nostrils; varnished doors and window-frames are slowly blistering in the heat; here and there, under dim arches, or by shady corners, tramps and ragged loafers obstruct the pavements, lying full-length with their heads pillowed on their coats, their vests thrown open and breasts bare to any benign breeze that may chance to find them.

Turning aside from all this into the garden, you are filled with a delicious sense of coolness and quiet. The stone path up to the church is sombrous with gently wavering shadows of lime trees, and the little wind that is moving has even a thought of freshness in it, though

the shaken leaves are so dry that they rustle with a crispness not unlike the sizzle of water boiling over on to a red-hot stove. The clusters of brilliant-coloured flowers that fill the trim beds are heavy with dust and drought; the green spaces are parched, but in the middle of one of them a man has wheeled a garden-engine, and is busy with a hose, showering over the grass a fine, misty spray that catches the sunlight and glitters and twinkles and falls like a shower of sparks.

At one end of the garden several ancient tombs are still left crumbling in their places; at the other end is a fountain in a shallow, circular tank, edged with a ring of grass; for the nonce some untoward mishap has clogged its pipe and the water rises but a few inches, and curves over and descends in a smooth, ropy stream; nevertheless, when its pipe is clear, you shall see it spout up and dance aerially, scattering its sunlit diamonds down again into the tank, and working and laughing in this beggarly paradise as royally as if it played in the courtyard of a king.

In a patch of shade on the church steps two men and a woman are reclining. The men are

fast asleep, but the woman, half awake and in a condition of maudlin drunkenness, croons a melancholy ditty to the baby that dozes fretfully in her lap, and pauses now and then to address an inarticulate remark to one of the men and to anathematise him freely because he never replies.

On one of the seats that are ranged at intervals along each side of the gravelled paths two shabby negroes of a nautical aspect hold discourse in droning undertones ; a dissipated tatterdemalion lolls with his head fallen back and his mouth dropping wide, snoozing indifferently beside them on the same bench. On another seat, with a sodden, unwashed lounger sleeping on his right and, crowding him on his left, a pair of half-drunken, hideous old trulls snoring softly in lax attitudes of repose, perches a short, stout, seafaring man in a blue jersey and soiled white ducks. He is so short that his feet scarcely reach the ground, and, hemmed in thus, he leans back with a stolid, ruminating expression on his weather-beaten countenance, abstractedly eyeing the bed of geraniums opposite, and sucking luxuriously at a very short clay.

All the other seats are occupied, and every

occupant is sleeping or going to sleep. One passes them with feelings of repulsion or of pity, according to one's disposition or the limits of one's experience; it is impossible in passing to remain indifferent. For the most part they are but bundles of unsavoury clothing and wasted or misshapen animal bodies huddled together in bestial slumber. How they live and in what vile piggeries, few of us know, and not many of us care. A hopeless, aimless race, they crawl from their holes sometimes to bask animal-like in the sun, to nose after wherewithal to appease hunger and thirst, and sometimes, after dark, to prowl in search of prey.

Near the ropy fountain a ragged little girl and her mother have a seat to themselves, and both are asleep under the shade of a disreputable umbrella that thrusts two bare ribs out shamelessly and is otherwise torn; and round about the fountain, and up and down the gravelled paths, a natty little servant-maid, attached probably to the establishment of some prosperous shopkeeper near by, wheels a daintily built mail-cart, brass-finished and having a crimson hood, and under the hood, in curious contrast to all the surrounding

sleepers, a year-old baby lies placidly dreaming amidst delicate, snowy frills and laces.

Quite suddenly a thin wail of lamentation is wafted round from the back of the church—a jarring, high-pitched note that yet disturbs nobody.

Behind the church is a barren, cheerless area not yet under cultivation; it is bordered on the far side by a scraggy hedgerow and, peering through this, you have sight of three or four rows of uprooted and banished tombstones that are packed away in a close passage between the hedge and an outer wall. Above this wall rise grim ends and rears of houses, portions of a factory building with a gigantic chimney, and alongside it an iron pipe curved at the top, which, with a spasmy panting, keeps puffing out fierce jets of white steam against the arid, dull blue of the sky.

Here, a few paces from the back gate of the garden, is a drinking fountain, stormed at present by seven half-naked urchins, two of whom are imbibing, whilst three struggle with them for the leaden cups that are chained to the basin; another, a long-legged, barefooted girl, stands apart with her lips to the neck of a tilted beer-bottle which she has

just filled from the fountain, and the seventh child is crying clamorously, and pestering for the instant reversion of the bottle to himself. The largest girl, who assumes maternal authority over the rest, comes from quenching her own thirst, and, championing the boy, deftly snatches the bottle, and is handing it to him when the bare-footed girl makes a reckless grab to recover it, and it slips instantly through their fingers and falls with a crash, the spilt water and splintered glass flying glistening in all directions.

Gusty echoes of their unseen quarrelling are heard thereafter in the tranquil forepart of the garden, where the blue-jerseyed mariner still smokes contentedly, the two negroes chat as if their talk and the day were endless, the drunken woman still sings drearily to her baby on the steps, whilst the neat nursemaid, making a soft little crunching on the gravel, wheels that happier baby to and fro amidst the flowers, and the gardener showers his spray of liquid sparks over the grass, and the forlorn many are still asleep.

The slow rattle of carts, an intermittent rumble of trams, muffled thunder of trains over an adjacent railway-bridge, and the

confused, multifarious murmurings of the streets—these, and such noises drifting faintly in from the outer world, melt into the dreams of the sleepers—even as one idly fancies they may sink down and melt into the dreams of those other sleepers in the dark earth below—touching them, haply, with far-off reminiscences of waking life and intensifying the bliss of slumber, and soothing the drowsy senses of those that are falling asleep, as pleasantly familiar voices do that we hear without heeding in our dreams.

X

AGAINST MODESTY

"Don't do to be shy—not in a world like this, mum," observed Mrs. Thingamy. "You never gits nothin' by not arstin' for it. If you do, it's only something that nobody else wants becos they know it ain't worth carryin' away."

"Yes, I'm afraid that's very true, Mrs.—er—Oh, dear me, I'm very sorry, but, do you know," cried little Mrs. Wilkinson, "I forget what the lady who recommended you to me said your name was——"

"That's nothing to be sorry about, mum; don't mention it; I orften wish I could forgit it myself. That's what comes of marryin' a forriner; but, bless yer, the country's so full of 'em nowadays that half the Englishmen can't speak their own language. So what *are* yer to do? I can't spell it, and I've left off tryin' to pernounce it, so you'd better call me Mrs. Thingamy, if you don't

mind, mum, like the rest of the ladies I chars for. It's easier, and don't sound like bad words, which is more than you can say for the real name.

"But what I was goin' to say, if you'll excuse me, mum, was—you mentioning that your good gentleman, Mr. Wilkinson, is too shy—you take the advice of a old woman, mum, and get him out o' that. It reminds me of young George Humby. 'Speak up, young George,' I used to tell him, many a time. 'If you're afraid to open yer mouth in the days of your youth,' I says, 'you'll find you won't have nothin' at all to put into it in yer old age when yer do open it. Any man can have his own way—if he's got the sense to take it. In case you don't see what you require in the winder,' I says, 'always step right inside and arst for it, and see that you take no other!'

"But, lor, you couldn't do nothing with George. Born shy, he was, y'see, mum, and that bashful and awkward that when you was speakin' to him there he'd be puttin' one foot behind the other and both his hands behind him, as if he was tryin' to sneak round the back of hisself and hide. 'You've only got to lay down quiet, young George,' I says to

him, ' and there's always plenty ready to wipe their boots on yer ; stand meek in the background, and you'll soon have the crowd shovin' in front of you and shuttin' out yer view. But jest you stiffen yer back and walk straight ahead, as if you knowed where you was goin', and meant to git there, and they'll start tumblin' over one another respeckfully, all in a hurry to step aside and clear the way and make room for you to pass. It ain't the best man that wins,' says I, ' but the man that makes the best of hisself.'

" But there you are, as I'm sayin', mum, he was born shy, and there's no use in tryin' to make a tadpole walk on end. It's the natur' of the poor critter to go about on its hands and knees, and go on 'em it will till it comes to a full stop. But I must say George was never quite so bad, as a general thing, as he was the time when he was makin' love to my daughter, Emmer."

Mrs. Thingamy wrung out the floorcloth, sat back on her heels, rolled her damp arms up in her apron, hugged herself, and chuckled reminiscently.

" We'd known George since he was a kid, mum, but Emmer she didn't like him, and he felt she didn't, and that made him all the

more awkward. He used to drop in at our lodgin's of an evenin' whilst me and Emmer was sewin' together, and take off his hat, and try to say 'Good evening,' and blush pink all over him, and sit near the door, and breathe hard and stare at her. I talked and chatted to him free enough, and he'd seem to listen, and every now and agen I'd shut up so's to give him a chance. But he never did no more than to cough and clear his throat, and say it was much warmer than it was. He dussen't. Jest sit there, he would, and fix his eyes on Emmer, with his blush comin' and goin' all the while, like a revolvin' lighthouse.

"Once, when he got up suddenly to go home, he jerks a packet out of his pocket as if he'd only that moment recollected it, and he holds it out for one of us to take, mumbling away at something—you couldn't tell what he said. And as my daughter didn't take no notice, he give it to me—a 'armless box o' chocolates, that's all it was—and bolts out o' the room in such a state of mind that it sounded to me as if he hadn't been able to see the stairs in the dark, and next time he called he was wearin' some black stickin' plaster, and when I arst him he coloured up and says it was nothing as signified only he

had caught his face against the corner of the mantelpiece.

"Of course, mum, we ain't none of us got too much sense, but most of us has got enough to manage not to seem quite so silly as we are. But poor George hadn't even got that much. One Friday evenin' he come and set there, and breathed and coughed and half suffocated himself for a long while afore he pulls himself together and busts out desperately like: 'I say, Mrs. Thingamy, I've got a ticket for the Exhibition at Kensington to-morrow.' 'Well, I hope you'll enjoy yerself, George,' says I. 'Them sort of luxuries is beyond me,' I says, 'but I'm glad somebody can afford 'em. I'm no dog in the manger, I'm not.' 'I was a-wonderin' whether,' he says, stutterin' orful, and turnin' all the colours of the rainbow, 'you'd come along with me—I've got two tickets.' 'Me, George?' says I, very much surprised. 'Yes, Mrs. Thingamy,' he goes on, in a kind of panic, 'you; and if she could spare time for it, p'raps Emmer would come too—I've got three tickets altogether.'

"Emmer, she chucks her chin—she hadn't never got no patience with him. But for my part, so long as the vittles is good, says I, what does it matter if they're served up to

you on a cracked plate ? I promised to go, at once, and the long and short of it was Emmer said she didn't reely care one way or the other, but if there was a ticket she might as well go too, sooner than waste it.

" I don't believe there was any tickets at all, if you arst me. It's my belief he went and bought 'em next mornin', and he might have saved his money, for all the good he got by it. There's people who seems doomed to pay full price for everything, and then as often as not somebody else nips in and sneaks off with the goods whilst they're waitin' meekly for their change. George is one of them people.

" All the way to the Exhibition, in the train, and in the street, he keeps on one side o' me, and leaves Emmer on the other. He hadn't pluck enough to go round and sit or walk alongside of her, or even to take care he was sandwiched in between us. Even when he bought some bananas to eat on the road, he shoves the bag into my hands, sheepish-like, and mumbles, ' Give Emmer one.'

" Well, we'd scarcely turned round inside of the Exhibition when who should come up but Charlie 'Arris, that was rather sweet on Emmer ; and if the truth was known you may depend she'd let him know we was goin'

and told him to be there. Anyhow, there he was, and made as if he was downright astonished to see us.

"'Oh,' says Emmer, 'George Humby wanted to bring mother for a treat, and said, as he'd got a extra ticket, he didn't mind if I come with 'em, so I come.' 'What-ho!' grins Charlie, pretendin' to wink sly at George. 'Artful young dog, Humby! He's a dangerous chap, Mrs. Thingamy,' says he, 'and I don't wonder such a lovely young widder as you wouldn't trust yerself with him without a shaperon,' he says, 'but I dessay he'd sooner have you all to hisself—I know how it feels,' the young scamp he says, laughin', 'so I'll look after Emmer—you come with me, Emmer. Don't you disturb love's young dream,' he says, winkin' at George agen, who couldn't speak a word, but only kept goin' redder an' redder, and lookin' uncomfortable all over.

"So they made me and him move on in front—him a bit of a boy, as thin as a airy railing, and a fat old woman like me—and Charlie and Emmer gigglin' and makin' fun behind us. Fair ridicklus we looked, I can tell yer, mum. But we never missed one of the sideshows, and George paid for the four of us. He offered to, and Charlie let him. We

went down the water-shoot, and I screamed and grabbed George round the neck, I was that scared by it, and some of the other people in the boat bullied him, and told him to catch hold of me, and did he want to see his poor old mother tumble out and be drowned! So he held me safe, and Charlie held Emmer safe, and there was no accidents. We tried the joy-wheel, and flew round in the flyin' machines; and then whilst we was strollin' listenin' to the band, we lost Emmer and Charlie, and had to spend the rest of the evenin'—him wanderin' with me and lookin' as miserable as if he was goin' about with a gum-boil—lookin' for them.

"But it was no good—we couldn't find 'em anywhere. So at last he has to see me home by meself. And I was that tickled with him bein' so glum that I couldn't help sayin' to him, serious-like, that I hoped his intentions was honourable, and that though I was thirty years older than him, it was no odds, becos he'd be the same age hisself some day if he took his meals reg'lar and lived long enough; and that give him such a nasty shock he left me quite sudden at the door where I lodge, without sayin' good night, and fairly ran away, and he's never bin near us since. It was less

than a year after then I married my forriner, and Emmer she was made Mrs. 'Arris.

"And that's the wust of shyness; it not only doesn't pay for itself but you have to pay for it. Impidence is what you want in this life; and the one that has most goes farthest. Folks are like sheep; they don't know which way to go till you show 'em. If you don't think much of yerself, then they don't think much of *you*. Put yerself in front of 'em, and they'll take it for granted you must be a leading man, and be glad to follow you." She swabbed the flannel vigorously across the boards. "Modesty pays—but not in the right way; and it's impidence that collects the money.

"Don't you forgit to tell your good gentleman what I said, mum!" she called, as Mrs. Wilkinson sighed and moved towards the door of the kitchen. "Modesty has no bank account and is always out at elbows, and patience is no use to anybody till he's dead. They say all things come to him who waits, but don't you believe it, mum. Don't wait a minute, that's the motter. Go ahead, and you'll soon find that all things come after the man who goes after them!"

XI

THE IDEAL HOLIDAY

Some persons boast of the holidays they have ; some that they never have any. I confess it is my own weakness to cherish a secret pleasure in the holiday I am going to have. Last year I had thoughts of taking it this year ; but I have changed my mind ; and next year I trust I shall be wise enough to postpone it until the year after.

This helps to make life worth living ; for it gives me always something to look forward to. I like to have it still stored safely in the future, to keep it secure, inviolate, as a miser hoards his gold ; it is a good thing to handle in dreams, to gloat over, to feel rich with, but not to spend.

Nor am I singular in this. No man actively enjoys his ideal holiday ; it is the one he is putting aside for himself, the one he is invariably going to have next time. Over and over again he may go away intending to spend it, but he invariably comes back without having

done so ; he finds when he gets there that he has come to the wrong place, or gone there at the wrong time of year, or with the wrong companion.

Almost every holiday resort looks far more attractive in the pictures on the hoardings than it is in reality. The skies are not really so blue and clear as the artist makes them, nor the beach so sandy, nor the fields so beautifully green ; the houses are not so picturesque, and probably the particular house that boards you is too particular—or not particular enough, and has an avaricious landlady, inferior cooking, comfortless beds, and the usual discomforts of a home that does not happen to belong to you. These essential details are left out of the picture in order to make it look prettier. Knowing this, I am contented to gaze at the poster, to be charmed with its pictured loveliness, and to promise myself that I will go there next year. But when next year comes, I go somewhere else. I am careful not to reverse the fable of the dog and the shadow : I will not drop a satisfying dream to grasp a reality that is sure to be disappointing.

And neither my health nor my pocket is the worse for this abstention. More people

have died of too much holiday than of overwork. We all know that, yet we continue to make a serious annual business of going out of town to be happy, as if it never occurred to us that happiness, like the proverbial woman, runs away when we run after it, but comes to look for us if we stay indifferently where we are or make a show of walking off in the opposite direction.

Enquire casually among your friends, and you will find that all of them think they work too hard, and most of them will confess to you that they never have what can fairly be called a holiday. I know of one man who goes holiday-making into the country two or three times a year and pays a brief visit to the Riviera automatically every autumn ; nevertheless, he gives it out seriously and with perfect sincerity that he has so much to do he gets no opportunity for relaxation and never has a holiday. If you remind him that he was away somewhere for a fortnight only last month, it irritates him a little; he admits the fact, but explains that this was not exactly a holiday—he had to keep in touch with his office and, on the whole, the bother and discomfort of it all did him more harm than good.

The mere circumstance that he was on a holiday and did not realise it, that he did not feel that he was having a holiday and subsequently spoke as if he really had not had one, illustrates the fallacy and folly of the whole system.

Holidays are not synonymous with idleness. A holiday does not consist in dropping your work and going to a strange place and doing nothing when you get there. Doing nothing is the chief part of some men's work; a spell of actual labour would be the finest of recreations for them. Nor does it consist in simple change of air or scene.

> "The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

The men who are most in need of a holiday are those who cannot possibly obtain one in the orthodox fashion; they leave their work behind, but take their worries, which are the worst half of it, along with the rest of their luggage, and too much leisure for thinking about things that are better not thought of is at the root of three-fourths of the physical and nearly all the mental ailments of mankind.

Even when his worries are not bad enough to worry over, a man seldom knows how to make

a real holiday. A dweller in some big city suddenly withdraws to a sleepy little village in the country or by the sea, and after the first few days finds the inconvenience and monotony rather irksome; he begins to miss the liveliness, the ample companionship, the noise and cheery bustle of town, and wonders why he is bored and tetchy, why he is looking forward with pleasurable anticipations to the day when he will be due back to the life he was so glad to get away from. He has plunged suddenly from the heat into the cold and is perplexed that it should make him shiver uncomfortably; or he has passed from the cold into the heat and is exasperated that he has to devote his energies to wiping off the perspiration. He feels lost, and pines for the comforts of his home, as the fireside cat would if you banished him into the desert. I dare say that a snail taken out of his shell and set naked in a place that did not belong to him would fail to realise that he was having a holiday.

There is another man, a very old friend of mine—he used to be busy for forty-nine weeks of the year in a small back office, going to and fro, morning and evening, on an omnibus that runs through the City and past his door at

Highbury, but in the other three weeks he would withdraw into Switzerland and climb mountains, because he had a settled notion that this brief, violent exercise ought to atone for his habitually having so little of any kind. He returned each year bronzed and healthy-looking enough, but languid and yearning for rest. Every year he repeated this programme more or less mechanically; the holiday did not seem to knock him up to any serious extent; he threw off his lassitude and regained his normal energies after an interval; but one year, at last, he came home in a state of physical collapse—he had slipped in climbing, and the slight shock, added to the usual overstrain, had reduced him to such an exhausted, run-down condition that he was not fit to resume work and was ordered off to a hydro on a rest cure. In his everyday existence he had been accustomed to taking things very quietly, and the reiteration of his abrupt departures from that style of living had gradually told on his constitution, so that now, though the rest cure so far restored him that he was able to recommence work in the City again, he remains to this day an enfeebled and dyspeptic misery, and is more than contented to pass his vacations

on level ground and in circumstances such as his ordinary manner of life has rendered natural to him.

I am convinced that we absurdly overestimate the value of a change of air. The same wind blows all round the world and, on the whole, it does you as much good to inhale it, amid sanitary surroundings, in London as at Brighton, for instance. At Brighton you have more ozone, it is true, but you get chalk in your drinking water, a disadvantage you evade in London; so, one way and another, these things balance themselves. Now and then, perhaps, the warmer sun by the sea and the extra allowance of ozone may be excellent as a stimulant, but, like all stimulants, it only benefits you whilst you continue taking it. A three-weeks' course of it is much more expensive than half a dozen bottles of a patent medicine, and coming home from the seaside is equivalent to discontinuing your physic: in a very short time you lose the temporary healthfulness you derived from it, and have practically got nothing for your money.

The ideal holiday, which is also the absolutely rational, solidly hygienic one, is not a change of air or place, but a complete change

of work. If a man has nothing else to do, he thinks, and overthinking is incomparably more deadly than overworking. Each of us is fully satisfied, privately, that his own work is harder than anybody else's, so there should be no difficulty in effecting an occasional exchange of occupations; by simply taking over each other's tasks for a couple of weeks or so yearly we should, judging by what we tell each other, be sure of an easier time, and the work being fresh to us would be as amusing as playing what we call games, and more useful.

Personally, I admit, I have all my life hankered to escape from books and pens and lazy gardening, and enjoy a strenuous spell of digging up roads and laying drain-pipes. I often stand and envy the men who are doing that; it seems to me they must be revelling in a continual holiday. Putting the pipes down, fitting one neatly in at the end of another, reminds me irresistibly of a game of dominoes; and when the road is being dug up, the iron pin being driven into the earth and two men hammering at it, to me it looks better and more gymnastic than golf. By changing places with a mason, any sensible citizen might carry bricks up ladders, balance himself with wheel-

barrows on narrow planks, and, indeed, secure all the exertion, peril and excitement of mountaineering in such a modified form as would be suited to his general habits and training; the danger of falling would be minimised; there would be no hotel nor travelling expenses; and he would have a happy consciousness of doing something that was at once useful to the community and amusing to himself.

Holidays of this sane and serviceable description could be adjusted in endless variety. Weary duchesses might ease their nerves by playing at shopkeeping or ironing shirts and collars in a laundry, whilst millinery and dressmaking and laundry hands obtained as complete and rapturous a change by fulfilling the duties of their aristocratic substitutes in the very best society. Think what a fortnight of novel and educational joy an earl might experience behind a stall in Whitechapel Road, whilst the emancipated coster was recreating in a glorious interval of high-feeding and carriage drives. Consider what an economical and ready relief a member of Parliament could give himself by merely exchanging engagements for a month with the master of a deaf

and dumb asylum ; and what a world of healthful profit would accrue to uncommonly faultless people of all sorts if for certain weeks of every year they were to put themselves in the places of—well, they might in turn change places with all the different kinds of men whose views and opinions they most noisily and intolerantly denounce. Then, when we heard less of them afterwards, we should guess it was because they knew more. For the very best way to close a man's mouth is to open his eyes.

XII

THE SEXTON SPEAKS

"YES—that's another one done," he repeated, climbing out and starting to scrape the soil off his boots with a stick. "Queer little old lady it's for, too, this one is. You'd have thought she'd have had to be buried by the parish, if you'd known her; but seemed she'd starved herself to death, pretty nigh, so's to save up enough to bury her, and now I've had to dig her one all to herself, so she's got what she wanted at last.

"I'd known her for years. Used to know her when her father was alive and kep' his carriage. I cleaned the winders and did odd jobs at their house for 'em, till I settled down to reg'lar work here. She was always affable and talkative to me in them days, but these last ten years. . . .

"Well, well, it seems silly of her when you think of it now, but I suppose she was about as proud as they make 'em, and whenever I met her these last years she kep' me at a distance,

and sometimes passed by haughty and dignified and pretended not to reckernise me.

"What for? Why, y'see, I was never a gentleman, and once upon a time she used to be a lady—that's about all. She'd come down in the world. Her father got hisself mixed up in some o' these shady financial games and bust up with a good deal of scandal an' died bankrupt. She was left without a penny, an' she was too proud to let her old friends patronise her or to make new friends among people as poor or humbler than she was. Kept away from everybody who'd known her in better times, and picked up work with strangers—sewing o' some sort for the shops, which barely kept body and soul together. Prouder than ever she was—as proud as if she'd been rolling in riches. Yet, as I say, she didn't have nothing at all of any sort to be proud of.

"Though, for that matter, if you arst me, neether have the rest of us," he added, with a twinkle in his shrewd old eyes, "but that don't prevent most of us from being terrible conceited! Now, I myself—I'm proud of not being proud. There's others that's proud of their pride, and others proud that they're not humble, and some that's very humble—and proud of that!

"It may be silly, but I don't say it's exactly wrong. All I say is, it's human natur'. That's what's the matter with every one of us. There's many a good man proud of what he's done, and many, just as good, proud of what they've left undone. This little old lady as I've been digging for, she was proud because she was once a somebody; and I've met many a gent that's risen in life and brags and is as proud as Punch because he was once a nobody. Some's proud of how much work they do, and some because they never has to do any. One man's proud of his forefathers; another, who never had no forefathers that he cares to mention, is proud of his sons; and one way and another the whole human race is a precious stuck-up lot altogether, and the only ones who might reely be entitled to be proud are them as ain't. If they was to be they wouldn't even have that to be proud of—so there you are! As for the very swell and high and mighty sort that's so full of their ancestors—why, in a sense they're no better than cannibals!

"A dog's proud of his tail, and a man because he ain't got one. There's where I sometimes think we're all a bit dotty. We're proud because we happen to have got something

that others haven't; and it don't strike us that very likely them others don't want it and have got something else that we have to rub along without. Or we're proud of the few things we can do, and never stop to reckon up the scores of things we can't do.

"'Course, mind you, there's a lot of pride that's harmless and even useful, because it gives the rest of us something to laugh at. In fact, I wouldn't object to any kind of pride if it didn't swell a man up so high that it makes him fancy he can look down on his neighbours. That's where the foolishness comes in. Don't despise nobody; that's all I bargain for; and as a rule you can't despise any man without making yourself despicable.

"But this little old lady—ah, well, we'll say it was her weakness. Most of us have got worse weaknesses than hers was, and to be poor and proud is punishment enough without you and me pointin' a moral to stick into her memory. She was too proud to let anyone see she was sufferin'; but, all the same, there's not much comfort, so fur as I can see, in pretending to feel cool whilst the fire's blistering you all over.

"No, there's no real happiness in pride—

nor in the other thing. Somehow, it seems to me, like, that no man can ever be quite happy unless he's eether too poor to be humble or too rich to be proud.

" That gent in the big vault over yonder—I recollect him very well. Dretful proud he was, when he was alive. Used to march past the likes o' me, pompous, as if he felt we wasn't fit to live in the same world with him. Used to speak to us, high and mighty and superior, as if he was goin' to live on here for ever and we ought never to have had the impidence to be born. Well . . ." He shrugged his shoulders. " There he is—over yonder. That's the end of it. He's got no more by all that swank, in the finish, than if he'd just been ordinary and friendly amongst us. He's no better now than any of the others lyin' round about us here, but I can see how scornful and indignant he would have been if I'd dared to tell him the day might come when such as me, instead of ducking and cringing to him, would stand and look down on where he was and be able to do nothing but remember what he used to be and feel how silly it had all been and be sorry for him.

" For that's what I am. Always seems to me

it's one of the saddest things in the world to stand by the grave of a proud man and recollect how proud he used to be. Ah, we're a rum lot—that's a fact! And it's easier to be sorry for us than angry with us. When I see the kiddies proud o' their new clothes, or because their fathers and mothers are more swagger than the fathers and mothers of the nippers that live next door, or over the way, it tickles me and I think, 'Bless the little varmints, they ain't old enough to know any better!' But when it's their grown-ups that's proud of the pritty things they wear, or the number of round coins they can chink in their pockets, or their houses and furniture, or education and ancestry, and all that: I pull up and remind myself that, all the same, they won't have nothing at the finish but a funeral, and a hole in the ground which, maybe, I shall dig for them, and once they're covered up out of sight they'll be as common and nasty rags and bones as the least of us. Then that makes me rather sorry for them, and I can't help sort of feeling —well, well, they know no better and, after all, it isn't only the kiddies that ought to kneel down before bedtime and put their hands together and say, 'Pity my simplicity!'"

XIII

SOME LONDON MEMORIES

I HAVE read so much about vanished London that I can sometimes nearly persuade myself that I have personal recollections of streets and odd corners of it which I know as a fact passed out of visible existence long before I was born. They may, indeed—for I realise them so clearly—be actual recollections of a former existence when I occupied another body and walked abroad in knee breeches and a cocked hat. Anyhow, there are moods in which, loitering past the Law Courts, for instance, I seem to have memories of a much narrower Strand, and of that ancient Butcher's Row which filled the same line of frontage there in the remote days of the first George—that huddled row of toppling, peaked, gabled shops that Gay pictures in his "Trivia" as having strings of combs and other merchandise dangling from their low penthouses into the faces of those who passed by on the strip of broken pavement. And I am satisfied that Bell Yard is one of the

identical attenuated lanes that Gay describes in his poem as opening on the Strand hereabouts and being occasionally choked with colliers' carts.

Before it had sobered into the dull, colourless, respectable lane it is to-day, Bell Yard was a frowsy, slummy, decaying thoroughfare of antiquated houses, some of which must have been coeval with the quaint shops of Butcher's Row. I knew it then, when the Law Courts were so fresh that they were called the New Law Courts, and the builders were still busy about them. The western side of Bell Yard had already been wiped out to leave the Courts a breathing space, and the surviving side was faced by stacks of bricks and a general litter of building material.

One of those frowsy Bell Yard shops sold second-hand furniture and shoddy curios; above it there lodged a certain solicitor who was a Commissioner for Oaths, and I, having an affidavit to make in connection with some legal proceedings, was recommended to patronise him because he was driving a brisk trade by illegally competing with other Commissioners and swearing affidavits for a shilling instead of eighteenpence. Entering by a musty, pinched side door, I mounted a groan-

ing staircase behind the back wall of the shop. Stairs and flooring were soft and crumbly under the feet ; the air smelt of dry rot ; and when I opened a door on the second floor it let me into a dirty, neglected, stuffy little room that contained nothing but piles of worm-eaten boxes, a nest of mouldy pigeon-holes, a crippled chair with straw stuffing sticking out of it shamelessly, a bow-legged table strewn with soiled papers, and seated at it a blinking, snuffy, damaged-looking old man with untidy grey hair. He must have been eighty at least : a worn, furtive, spectacled, disreputable old sinner who had outlived his practice and derived a shuffling livelihood wholly from administering oaths at less than the statutory fee.

I gave him my affidavit, and he mechanically handed me an amazingly dilapidated small volume tied round with tape that had once been pink. As he filled up and signed his part of the document, he ejaculated nothing more of the customary form of oath than a " So help you God. Kiss the book ! " and I confess I kissed the cleanest part of it warily. Its leather covers were worn to a spongy, yellow nap ; its leaves protruded torn and ragged edges round all four sides of it.

"I suppose," I remarked in jest, "this really is a Testament?"

He glanced across at the book strangely, as if he had not noticed it for some time; took it from my hand, plucked at the bow of the tape, and the whole thing tumbled to pieces.

"There you are," he muttered, fluttering the flimsy pages. "Matthew—Mark—What more do you want?"

He turned to the fly-leaf, and moving a grubby forefinger under an inscription there began to chuckle inanely.

"Look at that! See?" he said, pushing it towards me across the table and gurgling and chuckling softly, with his finger keeping the place as I read. There was his name written in thin, sloping, faded characters, and beneath it: "With fondest love from Annie"; then the name of some country-sounding place and a date that was more than half a century gone. "I was a good boy then," he chuckled. "My sweetheart gave me that. She married somebody else, though, and Lord knows where she is now—but there you are—it's a Testament right enough!"

He shook it together, and began twisting the tape round it again, and I was still suffi-

ciently young to be oddly touched by the thought of that little country girl, grown old or in her grave, and this insensate old rascal, in pursuit of shillings, letting her sacred gift out to be desecrated by alien lips.

But that is typical of all London. Scrape its new paint, or sweep aside its accumulated dust, and you are sure to uncover something of shattered or forgotten romance.

When I first went up and down Fleet Street, a small boy of twelve, Temple Bar was standing where now the Griffin ramps, and I recall lingering late one night to watch the workmen pulling down the Bar by the flare of many naphtha lamps, with the weird arm of a giant crane groping high into the dark above them and thrusting down its iron claws to pick off the loosened stones and lower them into the road. The grim, ancient barrier had been shored up with stout beams throughout my brief acquaintance with it; its narrow gateways on the pavements pleased me, and I had grown accustomed to seeing the buses crawling slowly in and out under its wider central arch, but I knew little more of its history than that the heads of traitors used to be spiked on its roof, or I might have been conscious that the

shadows of Dr. Johnson, of Goldsmith, of Lamb, and other of the immortals, paused beside me there that night and looked wistfully on with me at the woeful demolition.

So on sentimental grounds I have resented the presence of the Griffin ever since he made his appearance on that site. On the same grounds I shall never be reconciled to the improvements that have been made in Cheapside. There is a lofty, pompous stone building—a bank or insurance office—opposite the Mansion House, at the corner of Prince's Street and Poultry—that I regard with invincible dislike because it has shut out the cosy, picturesque old London tavern that once upon a time belonged there : a sleepy, rural-looking hostelry, it had a bumpy, red-tiled roof, two steps leading down into its sanded bar, and on the edge of the kerb opposite was a standpipe with several squat green buckets clustered round it. Beside the standpipe, a rheumaticky, antiquated man dozed on a stool in the sun, when it was summer, and in winter stamped up and down wrapped in an overcoat, some mufflers and old sacking to keep out the cold. At intervals he would stoop to the tap and set the water gushing into the buckets, and slop it over the pavement,

and proceed to quench the thirst of the bus horses that made this their stopping-place, whilst the driver climbed from his seat, descended the two steps into the bar, and quenched his own.

That such a leisurely business could ever have been transacted here, close under the eye of the Mansion House, seems incredible when you push and struggle at this corner among the swarming, roaring, congested, sternly practical traffic to-day; but I saw it and know that it was; and occasionally now, when I traverse the empty stretch of Cheapside towards midnight, when the whole place is eerily quiet and unreal in the lamplight and the starlight, I round the bend of the Poultry and come within sight of that corner of Prince's Street keenly prepared to discover that, at such a witching hour, the comfortable old inn has reasserted itself and the stone insurance premises have shredded away smoke-like and left it unveiled to the night.

London is statelier, more magnificent than it used to be, but what it has gained in splendour it has lost in homeliness and in picturesqueness. Anybody strolling along Holborn can see and admire the imposing new buildings

that have sprung up there in the last few years, but I would gladly give a half-dozen of the largest of them, if they were mine, to be able to restore to that Holborn byway, Brooke Street, the common little house in whose attic Chatterton died. I would even give two or three of them to bring back that curious old milk shop which snoozed until recently in the yard at the top of Brooke Street—a crazy, wooden shop that in its youth basked amid fields, but, when I knew it, was hemmed in by squalid courts and alleys and its green pastures buried under cobbles and paving stones, though it still kept above its door a mellow, dim, three-century-old signboard with browsing cattle painted on it and an announcement that new milk was supplied from its own cows which were milked twice daily at hours that were duly specified.

Some day, when Kingsway is a fine, respectably finished thoroughfare, nobody will remember the squalor of its predecessor, Clare Market, nor the indescribable atmosphere of romance that brooded over its dense, unwholesome, glamorous tangle of mean streets. Soon there will be nobody who can rightly remember Old Serjeants' Inn and the broad archway that

opened into it out of Chancery Lane ; and it troubles me sometimes to wonder what has become of the grotesque old ghost who had his home under that archway.

When I first knew London, you went through the arch, across the Inn, and round to the left to get to a row of low buildings that extended along a terrace overlooking the garden-square of Clifford's Inn. These buildings were those Judges' Chambers described in " Pickwick "— where the lawyers' clerks used to gather and raise a babel with shouting the names of the firms whose representatives they wanted to meet on business ; and in those days there always stood under the arch an obese, triple-chinned, shabby, elderly man who watched the stream of lawyers' clerks hurrying by all the morning, and when he could catch the eye of one of them he would duck, and duck ingratiatingly, and thrust forth a grimy hand to offer a pinch from his snuff-box. I never saw him do anything else, but I fancy he must have picked up a scanty income by carrying messages for chance clients. I saw him there like that for several years ; then one day he was absent from his post, and he never materialised again ; but every time I went in under the arch ever

after I was aware of him, though others might not have noticed that anything was there, and I knew that if I let him catch my eye he would duck dolefully and offer me an impalpable snuff-box. And now the arch itself is no more and I can know him no longer.

A day will come, too, when nobody will remember the sundial, the flowers and the pleasant garden that Clement's Inn and New Inn used to share between them ; nobody will remember the dingy, secretive Wych Street haunted with rumours of Jack Sheppard, nor the narrow lane of Holywell Street, with its dusky treasure-caverns of old book-shops on both sides of the way. But at present there are, of course, thousands who, like myself, can walk up that maimed section of the Strand where the hoardings are, just beyond St. Clement's Church, and still feel the stones of Holywell Street under their feet and be conscious of the shadowy, book-crammed shops brooding to right and left of them.

Oddly enough, though, I can never realise the place thus in winter or dull weather ; but often if I pass Clement's Church when all the Strand is flooded with sunlight I hear a sound of ghostly music beginning—the sobbing of a harp,

the wail of a cornet the shrilling of a flute—and straightway, a little beyond the church, I see the sign of the Rising Sun Inn facing me again, and the cramped, crooked alley of Holywell Street yawning near beside it; and a minute later I am passing up that grove of book-shops, the music growing louder and louder, as I have heard it on many a long-gone sunny Saturday afternoon, until I come in sight of the players: three broken, derelict men standing in the shallow bay that gives space for carts to pass each other. Dim-eyed old scholars, all manner of haunters of the second-hand book-shops are lingering to listen, or unconsciously giving an ear to the melody as they saunter from shop to shop poring over the books; and there—though the shopkeepers are scattered about London and you may notice familiar names of some of them above windows in Charing Cross Road—there so long as I live those three forlorn musicians will always be playing in the sunshine, and until their playing is ended, whatever may be built upon its site, the old street can never pass altogether away.

XIV

THE MAN WE ALL LIKE

The man we all like and the man we all ought to like are two very different persons. We do not readily take to the paragon who is too good for us in too many ways; but we often grow quite fond of the more mortal man whom we can look up to from one standpoint and down upon from every other. And it is this general weakness of ours, I think, that explains the pleasant popularity of such a man as Peckwater.

An unobtrusively good man is Peckwater; a harmless man; pays his debts punctually, lives within his income, neither drinks, smokes, gambles, nor uses words that are not in the dictionary; he works hard enough to earn his salary at least twice over, is a model husband and father, too humble to make enemies, and so anxious to live on easy terms with everybody that he would never dream of such a thing as trying to keep his garden in order by

throwing the weeds and worms over the wall into his neighbour's. He would not even be resentful enough to throw them back if he caught his neighbour exporting such details over the wall into his.

He is that kind of man. We do not want to be like that ourselves, so we can recognise his unprofitable virtues and eulogise them ungrudgingly, and grow moderately fond of him because he has got them.

Personally, I liked Peckwater very much as a neighbour. I have no hesitation in saying that as a neighbour Peckwater was the right man in the right place. He gave no trouble at all, and if there was any to be taken he invariably took it, without waiting to be asked. For instance, if you were to keep fowls next door to some men and could not train them to get their crowing and cackling done between sunrise and sunset, those men would either persuade the rest of your neighbours to sign a petition and indict you as a public nuisance and have your birds all suppressed, or they would maintain a flock of healthy, underfed cats that would spend their nights in breaking into your hen roost and their days in watching for your chickens to be let out for a run. But

Peckwater would not stoop, or rise, to anything of that sort.

His good-natured forbearance is such that if you kept fowls next door to Peckwater and their noise in the night broke his slumbers, he would be so sensitively anxious not to worry you with complaints or to seem exacting or any way unfriendly that he would assure you, suppose you were so kind and considerate as to question him on the subject, that he never even heard them, or that so far from being disturbed by them their agreeable music acted on him like a lullaby. Then he would secretly transfer his bed into one of his front rooms and, if necessary, give up sleeping with the window open and lay a sandbag along the middle of the sashes.

So, of course, none of us can help liking Peckwater; we know that in arranging for our own comfort and convenience we need never stint or hamper ourselves from any fear of encroaching upon his. If we do encroach, Peckwater won't mind; or if he does, he will say he doesn't, which is just as good—for us. We like him as we would like any good, good-natured creature whose amiable weakness of character makes it easy for us to elbow him

into the background and leave the front seats everywhere free to our more important selves and our more showy and notable acquaintance. We like Peckwater for the accommodating patience and generosity with which he forgives or is indifferent to the little or larger slights it may suit our pleasure or our pride, from time to time, to put upon him; we like him for this, but, more or less consciously, we despise him for it too.

To win everybody's liking you have got to like everybody; and when, with much tact and trouble and much loss of self-respect, you have managed to do that, you will find that nobody values what everybody possesses. Peckwater is one of those wistful weaklings who yearn to be liked by all who know them, and by his constant and ready yielding to our wishes, his flattering concurrence in all our opinions, and his equally flattering and tacit acquiescence in his natural inferiority to ourselves, he makes the task a pretty easy one for most of us. He never rouses our antagonism by attempting to stand betwixt us and the sunlight; he is contented and happy to walk in our shadow, and it so hurts and worries him to suspect that somebody has conceived a dislike to him that

you have only to make a show of unfriendliness to have him fussing around to oblige you and confer benefits upon you in order to regain your regard.

"Poor old Peckwater!" we laugh about him behind his back to the flourishing and dangerous rivals whom we detest, though we are too prudent to tell them so; "he's a dear fellow, but he'll never do any good for himself. Clever —'m, yes, perhaps—but a bit of an ass. Hasn't got enough go in him to get anywhere worth going to—no self-confidence—a nice, obliging, harmless chap, though, and you can't help liking him!"

For nobody is such a universal favourite in his own set, I suppose, as the man whose rivalry nobody fears. Those who tell you that we only find out how much we really love a man after he has got on in the world and is thoroughly successful may have some reason for wishing you to believe that, but it is not true. The extent of a man's success can usually be gauged by the number of his enemies; you must resign yourself to remaining a comparative failure if you are anxious to have many friends.

There was a time when Barker—(both he and

Peckwater are known by other names, but I am discreet enough to label them here with aliases)—there was a time when Barker was almost as commonly liked as Peckwater is. But that was before he became famous and went to live in an expensive house in a fashionable suburb. Since then, we are bitterly agreed that he has changed towards us ; whereas, the simple fact is it is we who have changed towards him. While he was a struggling outsider, less successful than ourselves, we honestly liked him ; his lowness served to accentuate our height ; he had nothing we cared to take away from him ; and, to be frank about it, we resent his excelling us as a something rather unkind and presumptuous, if not actually in bad taste. We were used to ranking ourselves indisputably above him, and now his greater height makes us seem small. And though we might possibly be magnanimous enough to pardon, with a last breath, the man who kills us outright, we can never quite forgive him if he wounds our vanity.

We do not mind going to dine with Barker, even now. In a manner of speaking we are proud to have it known that we are, or were, on terms of intimacy with him, and except

when we are talking privately and in strictest confidence we are careful to say that we admire and like him still. We say it loudly and frequently; but we do not mean it. The truth is we grudge him the rewards of his labour because they are larger than ours, and it is impossible to believe that anyone competing with us can deserve more than ourselves. We ascribe his good fortune to chance, to accident, to favouritism, to back-stairs influence—to anything but his own merits.

Love may be blind, but envy sees double. Barker is probably the same man as ever, but we behold in him now with a painful clearness all those blots and blemishes of character that were invisible to us when we were not considering him as a rival. His chief fault is—but we do not so clearly detect this one—that he has risen to a height where we are unable to follow him; we call him a snob because he has disquieted our self-complacency by progressing instead of remaining stationary alongside of us; we blame him for soaring beyond us as if he were responsible for the weakness of our wings. In a word, we dislike his prosperity, and this chilling our regard for him we assume it is he that has grown cold to us.

No; we certainly do not like the man who outstrips us; and we only like the one who lags behind because he is not in front of us. We sometimes like the man we have been able to oblige, but rarely the one who has greatly obliged us; we chafe against the mean feeling that we are under a large obligation to him, that he has an unquestionable title to our gratitude, as a tax-gatherer has to our cash, and we go on paying up, but we do not love the collector.

If the conferring of an incalculable obligation could create an affection for the person by whom it was conferred, then Dodson would like George Wilkins better than any other man he ever knew. But he does not. On the contrary, I have heard him refer to George Wilkins in language I would sooner not repeat. And yet he cannot deny that if it had not been for George he would very likely have gone to an untimely grave several years ago.

"Of course I don't deny that. I can't!" said Dodson, when I reproved him. "If I had lost my life I should have lost everything else that belongs to me, as you say, and therefore, in a sense, I owe all I have to George, and it all belongs to him. Yes, and he behaves as if that entitled him to an everlasting commission on it.

I reckon I paid him handsomely for what he did, at the time, yet ever since——

"Well, look here! When I fell out of that punt I did not know the water was so shallow just there that I had only got to put my feet down and walk out with my head and shoulders above it. I didn't know that. But George Wilkins did, and he took advantage of it. He waded out without risk—he pretended to swim and towed me ashore, and the crowd on the bank cheered, and followed him to the hotel cheering all the while, and next day's papers printed his portrait and called him a hero.

"All I know is that after he got me out, he didn't consider five shillings was sufficient. It happened to be every penny I had on me. Oh, no, I am not insinuating anything! I am willing to take it for granted that the rest of my money fell out of my pockets into the water before he reached me. Still, he is rather a low man, and he grumbled. 'Five bob won't buy me a new suit, guvner,' he said. Is that like a hero? Aren't heroes expected to refuse rewards and prefer to do it for nothing? Well, if you say so, I suppose that must account for it, and George was one of the other sort.

"Anyhow, I gave him my card, and he called

for the balance. I don't complain about that. After what was said I was expecting him. But he would not let it stop there. He treats it like a running account, and is still spending most of his time in running after it. There he is—chronically out of work, and being under such an obligation to him I haven't got the pluck to say no. It would look so brutally ungrateful; think how people would talk of me!

"It's all right for George Wilkins. It's as good as an annuity for him. But I can't afford to go on like this. If I dare to breathe a word of complaint, he is indignant and reproaches me; goes and puts it about that I'm a contemptibly ungrateful hound who misrepresents the unfortunate hero who saved my life so as to give myself an excuse for not putting my hand in my purse to keep him from starving. I tell you, it is getting simply unbearable! I frequently go a mile out of my road on the way home to avoid meeting him in the street, and as for liking him——! Well, if you knew how I feel sometimes you'd understand me when I say that if this is going to continue, then the sooner one of us is dead the better it will be for the other one!"

With modifications this is what any man is

liable to bring upon himself by doing us a good turn. We are so apt to be obsessed by an irksome suspicion that he is remembering our indebtedness after he has forgotten it, that he is still expecting our gratitude even though he does not ask for it, and in the coils of that deplorably human suspicion our liking for him is slowly and miserably strangled. There are exceptions, but it is certain that most of us do not like the man to whom we are indebted, nor the man who is indebted to us. The perverseness of humanity is such that, as Polonius warns us, it is wiser not to hope to make friends either by borrowing or lending, by either accepting favours or conferring them.

Peckwater comes nearer to fulfilling the ideal. He is a man we really do all like; but, after all, he is not the only man nor the man we like best. We are not proud of him; we do not boast of his friendship; he is neither rich, famous, important, nor aristocratic; he is a mere nobody, and, being dull, nervous, unconvivial, has no social qualities. We approve of him as a neighbour; we like him in his place; but his place is not beside us in good society. There we prefer to coruscate as equals among people who are better than ourselves.

With reservations, at different times, in different places, and up to a certain point, we like so many persons that, in the long run, it is practically impossible for us to single out any particular man or type of man as the one that all of us prefer to every other. Nevertheless, there is indubitably one man whom each one of us does in his heart most positively like. I shall not presume to say whether he is the best or the worst of men, the wisest, most foolish, the handsomest or the ugliest. But there is no doubt that we are so fond of him that nearly everything we do is done directly or indirectly for his benefit. We are always thinking of him; we are genuinely sorry when he is ill; we as genuinely rejoice in his well-being; though all the world should be against him, we remain loyal and never turn our back upon him; however bad his reputation, we can find excuses for him and are fatuously convinced that he is a wonderfully likeable fellow; and however plain or unlovely his countenance may appear to others, we are satisfied that it is at least intelligent and good-looking, and say as much to ourselves every morning whilst we are doing his hair.

XV

THE SILENT WAY

The usual Sunday morning market still rages in Petticoat Lane, though the early froth and excitement of it are beginning to subside; there are gaps in the rows of stalls whence barrows have gone home; here and there other stall-keepers are packing up and making ready to go; but for the most part the Lane is still agog and aroar and trading frantically.

Gramophones are braying; there are shooting galleries, glittering brazen weighing-chairs, try-your-strength machines—all as at a holiday fair; tailors, fishmongers, toymen, greengrocers, hatters, hosiers, butchers, bellow alluringly along the gutters or from the doorways of dingy shops; and everywhere, squeezing through the crowd, are pedlars dangling bunches of braces, handkerchiefs, stockings, or with piles of trousers on their shoulders—most of them Jews, many of them swarthy foreigners, and each adding his drone or whine or shout to the general pandemonium.

Bells are ringing for morning services out in sedater streets; and hearing them as we emerge from the roar of Petticoat Lane we remember it is Sunday, and that three minutes' walk will bring us to the serene, retired Quakers' meeting-place that we set out from home to-day with the intention of going to.

The motley life of the City surges past that meeting-place daily and all day long without touching it or even being aware of it, for it is simply a small hall in the depths of a sordid mammoth building that is honeycombed with offices wherein, throughout the week, clerks are busy over ledgers, and the stone corridors echo to restless feet and the clatter of typewriters.

From the noise and the sunlight to-day we pass down one long, dim corridor into another and here, to the left of us, is the hall of the Friends. The swing-doors flap behind us as we enter, and the world is instantly shut out.

It is a severely unadorned room, a plain, square outbuilding, windowless but for a wide skylight. There is no pulpit, but at the inner end of the hall is a slightly raised platform on which, behind a table that is covered with green baize, is a row of wooden seats. The

boarded floor, which is naked except for strips of oilcloth up the aisles, is occupied by uncushioned, stiff-backed benches, and sprinkled sparsely over these is a congregation of some four-and-twenty. Another enters just before the service begins, and you know he is a Quaker because he does not involuntarily remove his hat, but walks down the aisle wearing it, and takes it off casually after he is seated.

To the left of the platform sit the women, to the right of it the men ; but this rule is not rigidly adhered to, for there is an aged man hunched solitary amid the desert of bare benches on the women's side, and amongst the sombre-coated men is a young girl in a white dress sitting beside her sweetheart.

Of the dozen women only one, a placid, sweet-faced old lady, wears a drab cowl-bonnet and the distinctive Quaker garb ; the others are dressed quietly enough, but some have splashes of colour in their hats and sparkles of jewellery about them. The men are equally undistinguished by their clothing ; without exception they wear either the conventional frock-coat and tall hat, or the simpler short jacket and bowler.

On the platform are two men and a woman ;

the woman a stout matron of a motherly, double-chinned aspect, with plump, ungloved hands folded in her lap; the two men are gentle-featured and old—one with a long grey beard, the other with a tanned, clean-shaven face that is much wrinkled, and a figure that is bent with years.

Minute glides after minute, and all sit mute and motionless, till the deepening calm has submerged us in a wonderful restfulness, a foretaste of that perfect peace that must be with the dead who are buried and immeasurably remote from the world and from all care. In this profound hush the solemn, monotonous tick . . . tick—tick . . . tick of the clock on the wall acquires awesome distinctness and significance, as if it were the very intensity of the silence kindling and becoming audible; and the twitterings of the sparrows out above the roof only help one to realise more fully the stillness of the air within.

All the while we are aware of a very, very faint murmur, such as you may detect when you put your ear to a shell, and it does not occur to us that it is the sound of the City until we notice how at intervals the murmur grows to a dull hum, which is of wheels passing in the

street, or to a thin, raucous buzz, which is of a motor-car whizzing past beyond the far end of the long corridor, somewhere out in the world from which we are separated.

Nobody stirs. There is no sound at all but the solemn tick . . . tick of the round, white-faced clock, the twittering of the sparrows, and that muffled, alien murmur from the streets; till, at the end of a quarter of an hour, a man on one of the benches rises slowly to his feet, and begins to pray.

He speaks in a dreamy, subdued voice, but so deep is the silence, so muted every other sound that breaks it, that whilst he is speaking nothing else remains audible; it is as if the clock were stopped, the birds gone from the roof, and the City dwindled so far away that no slightest echo of it can reach us any more. He speaks leisurely, with a pleasant country burr that touches you with a fancy of how among London's wilderness of streets his heart must cry out for the earth's green spaces, even as his soul does for heaven, and it is something of this yearning that gets into his voice and transfigures his almost crudely simple language to a beauty and a meaning that are not otherwise in what he says.

For five minutes his appealing cadences rise quietly ; then the silence returns, the clock resumes its steady tick . . . tick—tick . . . tick, the sparrows twitter above the roof again, and again there is the murmur from the distance thickening to that hum and buzz that are gone almost before you have heard them.

Ten minutes more of such silence, in which the anxieties of our everyday existence seem as petty and far removed as if we were of the dead who had risen and were waiting, filled with patience, in some vestibule of eternity ; then suddenly another voice is speaking, this time a woman's.

The matronly, comfortable dame on the platform has knelt, and with her face in her hands is praying. There is no declamation, no shouting, nothing but thoughtful, unemphasised earnestness, and when in a few minutes she ceases, we are reabsorbed into that hallowed silence till another of the men is moved to deliver a homely little address.

Then, but each time it is after an interval of dumb meditation, another prays ; then the greybeard on the platform brings a Testament from his pocket and reads a chapter ; then another of the women, hesitantly and modestly,

utters a brief, simple homily, and illustrates it with a commonplace personal experience that she thinks may be helpful to others; and so, after a long, final pause, the greybeard stands again, and prays.

A slow, humble prayer of gratitude for the touch of healing, the sheltering calm that comforts these patient worshippers when, after the stress of each week's work, this Sabbath silence refolds them under its wings and for one ineffable hour they are able to escape out of the slough of the great city and climb by quiet paths as high as to the gates of heaven.

Whilst you listen to him, the long, dim corridor by which we came hither from the streets shows in remembrance as a magic footway leading out of the glare and tumult of life into a place of dreamful rest where the world can be forgotten. Slowly and meditatively he prays, so slowly and so meditatively that sometimes he stops altogether, and presently, as if he had waited for an inspiration, goes quietly on again, until the lingering, pleading voice seems to have gathered into itself all the doubt and the trouble that men feel and laid them at God's feet, and left them there; so that, at last, when we go out through the shadowy corridor and

find our way back into the streets, the turmoil of them does not penetrate the calm and profound peacefulness that encase us like an invisible armour, and there remains with us yet, and for certain hours after, a sense as of strange ease from burdens that have been lifted from our shoulders.

XVI

MAN'S RIGHTS

"I DON'T care what it is," the Honourable Fitz repeated, with mild pertinacity. "I like to hear the plain truth about everything—even about myself."

"You like to think you do. We all like to think so, Fitz," said the Youngest Man in the Club, settling more comfortably into his easy chair and toying with a cigarette. "But usually when we do hear it—especially if it happens to be about ourselves—we conclude that the other man must be an awful liar."

"Don't be cynical, my boy," the Major struck in reprovingly. "You are getting too old for your years."

"Odd; but haven't you noticed it, Major? A fellow rarely seems to realise how young he is till he is growing old enough to die."

The Major coughed and, passing an uncertain hand over his nut-brown hair, regarded the Youngest Man doubtfully.

"I'm afraid," he began vaguely, "if we all told the truth about ourselves——"

"Our friends would be ashamed to own us," interrupted the Youngest Man. "But we can't do it, because we simply do not know the truth about ourselves. You know the truth about me, perhaps, and I know the truth about you; but we are too polite to tell it to each other. As for what any man may choose to say about himself—well, the kindest and safest rule is, when he boasts about himself, don't believe him, but don't say you don't; and when he starts confessing his faults, believe it all and a little more, but hint that you don't."

"You think what a man speaks in his own favour, then, is bound to be false," remonstrated the Honourable Fitz, "and what he says against himself is all true?"

"All half true, my dear Fitz," sighed the Youngest Man, "and that, as the poet says, is much worse than the other thing."

"But we are getting away from the subject. I was remarking on what I had been reading in the newspaper concerning the survival of the fittest," the Honourable Fitz presently resumed. "What I should like to know is—who are the unfit? Where are they? Did you

ever meet any man who owned to being one of them ? "

" Never."

" Where are they, then ? Who are the fit ? "

" You are one, my dear Fitz. So am I," said the Youngest Man promptly ; " and the Major here is another one."

" Very well. Accepting that for the sake of argument," the Honourable Fitz pursued, " what about the unfit ? Where are they ? "

" Oh, well, the Major's one, of course. So am I," returned the Youngest Man easily ; " and you, my dear Fitz, are another one."

The Major frowned, and cleared his throat, and muttered darkly. The Honourable Fitz flushed, and for all his native gentleness retorted rather tetchily :

" That is absurd. If you intend to treat it as a jest——"

" Never more serious in my life ! " declared the Youngest Man. " Like everything else, it depends entirely on the point of view. Every man naturally catalogues himself among the fit, and discovers the unfit next door, or round the corner. None of us would dare to argue about the survival of the fittest any more if

we knew precisely what most of our friends actually think of us."

"Much depends," remarked the Major, slightly ruffled, "on what is meant by the unfit."

"Everything depends on that," agreed the Youngest Man; "but the difficulty is we all mean something different. In the main, I take it, the upper classes, and the respectable middle classes who have made a bit of money, are satisfied that the right and natural law is that life is essentially a struggle, and we must not assist the weak and the pauper—we must stand aside and let them go on struggling so that the fittest may survive and the weakest go to the wall. But we have sense enough, in the meantime, to establish a police force, a gaol, and a gallows, just so as to make quite sure that the hefty lower classes shan't prove too fit and strong for ourselves. We swear by the great natural law, but, honestly, we are afraid to give it a fair chance. How long do you imagine you and I and the Major and the rest of our set would remain rich and go on happily surviving if the police force were disbanded to-morrow?"

"Why, if you take it literally like that—the

Major might be able to take care of himself; but as for you and I," the Honourable Fitz sighed and cast a doubtful glance down at his own attenuated frame and spindly shanks, and at the limp, languid figure of the Youngest Man, "if it came to a positive fight for existence—well, there you are!—where should we be?"

"I am very much afraid," said the Youngest Man gravely, "that we should not be."

"But as for remaining rich," the Honourable Fitz continued, with a touch of bitterness, "I owe twice as much already as I shall ever be able to pay. Everybody knows that."

"My own case exactly," laughed the Youngest Man; "and yet we count among the idle rich!"

"Economise. That's what you ought to do. Both of you," growled the Major. "Economise."

"I've thought of that," said the Honourable Fitz. "I've thought a great deal about that. I suppose I do allow myself what some people would call luxuries, but—it's no good—somehow I feel as if I must have them."

"Of course you must!" cried the Youngest Man. "The things we don't need are the very

things we can't possibly do without. It is easier to abstain from bread and water than from chicken and champagne."

"It really is very hard that a man in my position should be poor just because he happened to be the youngest of a lot of younger sons," lamented the Honourable Fitz. "You expect to find poverty among the poorer classes; it's natural to them; they're used to it——"

"Yes, and as the Major and I were agreeing last week," interposed the Youngest Man, "they are provided with workhouses and all manner of comforts, but no member of Parliament ever has a word of pity for the poor rich. Blood isn't what it used to be. People won't respect a man now merely because his great-grandfather was respectable. Kind hearts are more than coronets, and bank accounts than pedigrees, and horny hands than all the lot. I don't know what the world's coming to, but it looks very much as if the real upper classes now were the fellows whose seats are in the gallery."

"I frequently say," the Honourable Fitz went on again, after a painful silence, "it was the coming in of trousers that was the death knell of the aristocracy."

"Oh, but we're not dead yet," objected the Youngest Man cheerfully.

"The palmy days of our old nobility and aristocracy passed," the Honourable Fitz insisted, "with the doublet and hose, with knee-breeches, cocked-hats, buckle-shoes, and large-skirted coats. In those times if a man wore silk stockings you might guess he was a gentleman; if he wore worsted you knew that he wasn't. He could have his coat of costly fancy material made in whatever beautiful colour suited him, and he could set it off with priceless lace, and with gold, silver, or diamond buttons. He could indicate his taste and his rank in that unmistakable way. But when fashion put us all into trousers — why, all men looked commonplace alike. If you wear silk stockings now, nobody is aware of it. You could not put jewelled buckles in your top or bowler hat or in your boots without risk of being stopped by a policeman and taken before a magistrate who would order you to be placed under medical observation and the state of your mind enquired into. If you were to put frilly lace things on instead of an ordinary collar, or trimmed your morning coat with them, or your trousers, you would be followed

about by grinning crowds and might think yourself lucky if you got back home all in one piece."

"That's true. That's the worst of modern life," the Youngest Man admitted; "it's all built of the same pattern and in the same colour. My butcher and I both patronise the same tailor. You can't tell noblemen now from publicans or jockeys—not by the looks of them."

"I myself," observed the Major gruffly, "was mistaken the other night for the billiard-marker."

"Horrible! Scandalous!" ejaculated the Youngest Man. "Most annoying. But we might do a good deal to remedy that state of things by encouraging the modern tendency to wear uniforms. You couldn't make such idiotic mistakes about a boy scout, or a bishop. Nurses wear uniforms now, too, so do tramwaymen, railwaymen, postmen, messenger boys, A.B.C. waitresses, lord mayors, policemen, soldiers, sailors—they've always worn them; and it would be a great convenience if the practice became general. Let us have a special uniform for each trade and profession—for grocers, butchers, drapers, bakers, dentists, doctors, lawyers, actors, stockbrokers, artists,

poets, journalists, novelists, charwomen, dukes, earls, knights, baronets, and so on. Then we could recognise a man's business or standing at a glance, and should never humiliate ourselves by addressing or lifting our hats to the wrong person.

"I would go even further, and just as the Major may wear on his chest the Medals and Orders awarded to him for fighting and killing a lot of johnnies in battle, I would say to the man who saves our lives by inventing a baking-powder that makes bread and pies digestible, or a nourishing baby-food that keeps us from dying in infancy—I would say to him too, 'Bring out your Exhibition gold medals and hang them on your waistcoat so that we may know you have done valuable service to the community and are more to be honoured than others of your class.'"

"Oh, but that doesn't matter. I don't care about trifles of that sort," said the Honourable Fitz curtly. "I am talking of the higher things of life—the great things—and what I say is that we, the upper classes, are robbed of the privileges that belong to us—we have no longer the social position and influence we are entitled to. We have not the wealth and the

respect that should be ours by birth, and I demand my rights—no more, and no less. That's all I want."

"That's all that we all want," cried the Youngest Man; "but other folks think we ought not to have them; and consequently they are only ours so long as we haven't got them. As soon as we get them, they are not our rights any longer."

"Oh, indeed? What are they, then?"

"Somebody else's wrongs, Fitz."

XVII

MODERN GRUB STREET

When you pass along Milton Street, out of Fore Street, tread softly, for this is the saddest byway in literary London. Its old haunted houses have gone from it with its old name, and it is nowadays a busy place of warehouses, offices, factories ; but once—long since—it was that identical Grub Street which Pope and Swift wrote of with such pitiless contempt ; it was the traditional home of the poorest, most hopeless of literary drudges ; and one is sorry that Swift and Pope could bring themselves to stoop from their comfortable prosperity to hit those men who were down.

Of course, there is a sort of crude humour in the records of the street—in that story, for instance, of the two broken scholars who shared a wretched attic and had a suit of clothes which they took it in turns to wear, one sitting in bed at work with a blanket round him whilst the other walked abroad respectably and

called upon the publishers; but it is probable that the men themselves were not often in the mood to appreciate all the fun of the situation.

Then, as now, there were more ways into Grub Street than out of it. Accident, sickness, poverty, drunkenness, indolence, incompetence—these are a few of the ways in, and once in, even the ablest of its harassed, ill-paid denizens rarely succeeded in escaping and leaving their dirty cellars or leaky garrets behind them again until they were carried out to the debtors' prison, the madhouse, or a pauper's grave.

I am assured from time to time by prosperous authors that there is no Grub Street now worth speaking of; but this proves only that they do not happen to be acquainted with it. There is no longer any street of that name, it is true, but the life of the old street still goes on, and there are more people living in it than ever. Many are married, and herd in shabby suburban lodgings, travelling into the City daily by tube or tram to plod at heavy, unprofitable research work in the British Museum, to hover about newspaper and magazine offices with suggestions for articles, in the hope that they may be commissioned to write them;

or they sit at home laboriously bringing school-books up to date, writing or translating popular histories, or memoirs, or endlessly sending stories, articles and verses to the magazines by post and receiving too many of them back again.

In the original Grub Street there were no women, but there are almost as many women as men in it now—faded, tired, suppressed-looking souls, for the most part, haunting the British Museum Reading-Room, searching, copying, taking notes for the behoof of authors who are affluent enough to employ them thus, and making one feel, seeing them, that the world might be a healthfuller, happier place without this literature that fosters so much misery. They live in cheap boarding-houses, in bleak little flats, in dull back rooms of shabby-genteel roads, eking out their Museum earnings by writing such feeble little tales and articles as weary women can write and selling them when any editor can be induced to buy.

Most editors know some of these hapless ones and the appealing letters they write; now and then one or another of them, desperate with poverty, or worried by the costly sickness of some relative dependent on her, will call at the editorial office and pour out her story with

sobs and tears and beseech that an impossible manuscript may be accepted and paid for there and then. These suffer enough, but there are those, too proud to ask for pity in any circumstances, who suffer far more.

On the other hand, there are a good many who, by persistent industry, a useful business faculty and a little luck, contrive to make both ends meet and, even in Grub Street, to maintain a spirit of independence in comparative comfort. In a court off Holborn lives one of such—a pleasant, cheery old lady who has been bedridden all her life. She had youthful notions of rivalling Elizabeth Barrett Browning, but for long enough now has been contented to addle a scanty livelihood, lying helplessly abed, by writing verses for children which her niece hawks round and sells at threeha'pence and twopence a line to certain magazines that are regular customers of hers. She is one of the fortunate minority ; but I fancy that even she is sometimes afraid of to-morrow, for she grows old and her infirmity is increasing upon her.

One of the most promising men I have known died in Grub Street a short time ago. I made acquaintance with him when we were both about twenty ; he was then fresh from

Oxford, was something of a dandy, very ambitious and self-confident, with brilliant gifts as writer, artist and musician. He was in a hurry, and grew impatient at the slow progress to be made by contributing poems and stories to the magazines, and eagerly accepted a small part in a theatrical company that went a successful tour through America. Returning, he emerged on the music-hall stage and rapidly became one of the most popular low comedians of the day.

He wrote both words and music of his own songs; they were whistled, and hummed, and barrel-organed everywhere about the streets, and to this day lines from some of them survive among the commonest catch-phrases current. He sang at several halls nightly, dashing from one to another in an elegant private brougham; he was caricatured and flatteringly described in the "Entr'acte"; and portraits of him were familiar in the illustrated papers.

Then, all of a sudden, he went under.

I believe he had drifted into drinking rather recklessly; he broke engagements; was hissed off the boards because again and again he could not recall the words of the song he started to

sing; and presently was a complete nervous wreck, and no manager would have anything to do with him. He took the easy but fatal way to forgetfulness and was soon shifting from an imposing house to furnished apartments, and thence by way of cheap lodgings, Rowton Houses and common doss-houses, came to sleeping occasionally on the Embankment. He passed from dining at the Savoy to being glad when he could afford a meal at Lockhart's, and instead of earning two or three hundred pounds a week, he was grateful for the weekly five shillings paid to him by a cycling journal for a column or so of paragraphs. This work slipped through his fingers, and when I first came across him after his calamity his sole income was a few shillings he could pick up by singing at smoking concerts or writing topical verse for the newspapers. He was reduced to such an appearance of beggary that he asked me to walk with him in the back streets, where we were less likely to run against people who knew him than if we adventured into the Strand.

Though we had occasionally written to each other, I had not seen him since he departed on that American tour, and remembering him as

I had known him, and remembering all I had read of his roaring prosperity, I was ashamed to offer him money; when I did so, he accepted it with a jest, then turned his face abruptly from me and began to cry. "Awful fool, but I couldn't help that," he said, with a wry grin, quickly pulling himself together. "I didn't like to ask, old chap, but I wanted that badly. . . . Haven't had a real meal for a week."

In the winter, a few months later, he was found dead, lying half-dressed across his bed in a fourpenny doss-house in Blackfriars Road, and a coroner's jury agreed that he had been ill for weeks, and had died of pneumonia.

Perhaps a more conventional Grub Street author was one who took his troubles lightly, worked fairly hard, and, I believe, enjoyed life after his own fashion. He was continually changing his address, owing to the obduracy of his landlords and landladies in the matter of rent. He wrote numerous serial stories, and sold them for as little as five pounds apiece; he wrote two books that were published by famous publishers, but his share of profit and glory from them was too small to need counting. His only successful novels were three or

four that he wrote for a very popular novelist of the unimportant kind who was much too busy to do more than put his name to them and annex two-thirds of the royalties that accrued from them.

There was a dazzling period in which he dug up an innocent capitalist from somewhere and founded a weekly theatrical magazine, and, with a view to emphasising the grandeur of his position, he used to keep a box of cigars and a bottle of Benedictine in the office cupboard, and would produce these luxuries for the delectation of such visitors as he wished to propitiate or impress. On the death of the magazine he cheerfully reverted to his former state. I never knew him to be connected with a periodical that was built on a sound financial basis, but if there was one that started with insufficient capital, or one that lost its money and was reduced to a desperate fight for bare existence, he was pretty sure to arrive on it and work for what he could get, and when it gave up the ghost he seemed to feel a sense of richness in complaining to you of how much it owed him.

Once he encountered me in Holborn and announced with pardonable complacency that he had been appointed literary editor of a daily

paper which was, at that juncture, regarded as a strong enough and promising concern. He rattled money in his pocket, and insisted on my having a glass of port with him to celebrate his felicity. "But, of course, my toggery won't do," he remarked frankly as we touched glasses. "Bit too shabby, isn't it? My chief told me this morning he couldn't have me coming in and out like this—I was a disgrace to the paper, and I promised to go in for a frock-coat and a topper as soon as I could afford them. He wanted to know how much I could get them for, and I said three guineas; so he advanced that, and I'm on my way to the tailor's. Where's a good place for toppers?"

I had instant qualms; I was afraid I was drinking some part of that wardrobe, but had not the courage to say so. Whether he ever reached the tailor's I do not know; but when I accidentally met him and his wife and child a few weeks later he was still wearing the hat and clothing that he had denounced as a bit too shabby. They were strolling past the Law Courts; he was carrying the baby, and I have rarely seen three persons who looked more deplorably impecunious. I knew the daily was dead, and stopping its ex-literary editor then

to enquire after his welfare I learned that he was doing nothing in particular, but as the brokers were in at their lodgings up an ancient alley near Chancery Lane, and as it was a splendid sunny day and he had just managed to dispose of an article and collect the cash, he and his family were on their way to the Temple Stairs to board a steamer and take a run down to Greenwich.

These are sufficiently typical lives of modern Grub Street. There is nothing very uncommon about them; I could tell of others by the score, but there would be a sameness about them. One man who dwelt for many years in a common lodging-house and wrote poetry that no magazine would publish and that all the reviewers ignored when he made a book of it, attracted the attention of one critic who recognised his genius and by interesting the public more in the personal story of the poet than in his poetry won a sensational sale for his volume; hence, the publishers were more than ready to publish other books by him, and rising, at length, to acceptance as one of our few notable living poets he was quite recently honoured with a Civil List Pension. But he is an exception.

I knew another man who was born in Grub Street, and never escaped from it. Why he gave himself to literature and journalism Heaven only knows. He had no special talent; he could write paragraphs and articles that were no more than passable, and at sixty he was grubbing along as he had been at twenty. When his home had been sold up for a second time he never possessed another. In comparatively prosperous intervals, he patronised the Rowton Houses; when things were at their worst he slept in Trafalgar Square, or on the Embankment, or if it was winter took advantage of the Salvation Army shelters. He wrote a lot of indifferent fiction, and raised a modest income for a considerable period by composing advertisements for an advertising agent. His one boast was, for he was a classical scholar of sorts, that he had once edited an edition of Livy, for which he wrote a preface and notes.

Finally, he emerged from the workhouse infirmary after an illness, and thereafter you might have met him, an anxious, piteous-eyed, spectral, grey little man, loitering in Fleet Street or the Strand, depending for food and a bed on the casual charity of men who had

known him in his working days. And I have in an old pocket-book, where I keep such sad memorials, a newspaper cutting that relates how a policeman found him, early on a Christmas morning, crouched in a doorway of Fetter Lane; and, according to the newspaper, the coroner's jury decided that he had died of starvation.

You may take it, indeed, that Grub Street as a phase of life is very much what it has been ever since literature has been a profession. Otway, Savage, Chatterton, died in it; Johnson and Goldsmith fought their way through it. Don't they say that Johnson's habit of wolfing his food was a result of those days when he went hungry and ate ravenously? And you know how bitterly he writes of the author's life in his satires. Even Goldsmith, though he was keenly alive to the humours of it, and wrote of it genially, could write also the grim epitaph that will serve for every man who lives and dies in Grub Street:

> "Here lies poor Ned Purdon, from misery freed,
> He long was a bookseller's hack;
> He led such a damnable life in this world—
> I don't think he'll wish to come back."

XVIII

THE FOLLY OF GROWING OLD

THERE are at least three good reasons why no man should ever grow old : it isn't pleasant, it is not necessary, and it does not pay.

I am not denying that if you live long enough you will probably contract more or less of an outward semblance of age, but that is of no positive significance. I no more take it for granted that a man is old because he has wrinkles and a white beard than I accept him as rich because he wears diamond rings and a gold chain, or as great-minded because he stands six feet tall.

Between ourselves, I own there was a time when I looked forward with some uneasiness to the having to leave my youth behind me and qualify perforce for a place in the dreary catalogue of old men ; but I have long since laid such superficial fears aside. Every year of life has shown me a little more and, I hope,

made me a little wiser, until I know enough now not to reckon time by days and years; I have emancipated myself from the petty tyranny of the clock and the calendar, and have no concern with hours and dates and such-like arbitrary divisions of time, except in so far as they may serve us in conveniently regulating the everyday affairs of the planet we are at present inhabiting.

The human race, as a whole, has formed a careless and absurd habit of growing old mechanically. It assumes that all men must age and wear out at the same uniform rate as machinery does, and the very idea is apt to bring about its own fulfilment, as ideas usually do. I was disposed to assent to this condition at first as one that was inevitable in the ordinary course of nature. Not only my neighbours and other presumably common-sense people held to this as a universal law, with a pathetic belief in it and dread of it, but philosophers and even poets (who should have known better) conspired to lure me into resignedly subscribing to it with such beautiful fancies as :

> "What is age
> But the holy place of life, chapel-of-ease
> For all men's wearied miseries?"

It is that sometimes, undoubtedly, but it ought not to be. The body must assuredly grow old, but the mind need not; you may and should have a spirit of eternal youth living and enjoying life within you no matter how many years shall have gone over your head. If a mere seventy or eighty years is to make you aged in spirit as well as in body, what is it in you that can hope to go on untired up the endless avenues of eternity?

Of course, some men are born old in spirit; you find them at five-and-twenty or so as old in all but appearance as ever they are likely to be. There is no bloom of youth on the thoughts of such a man, nothing of the freshness and gracious rashness of youth in his speculations or impulses. He is supercilious and self-important for no tangible reason. He thinks too much of himself because he has not thought enough of himself—or of others. He attaches undue importance to small distinctions of wealth and birth; takes a ludicrous pride in some superiority of wardrobe or breeding or other the like pomposity of the flesh; sneers at whatever is gentle and ideal in humanity and waves it aside as sentiment and silliness; adopts a lofty attitude towards the young, and

patronises children, alert to correct them on minute points and to give them information that he has gathered out of books, instead of being sagaciously humble and interested enough in them to sympathise with their wise, unlettered views and imaginings, and so contented to listen and to learn from them. The truth is, he is so old in grain that he believes there is no one can teach him anything that matters ; that whatever is still unknown to him is not worth knowing. He cultivates a serious, supercilious, all-knowing air and manner that must make the angels laugh—or weep ; he is obsessed by a solemn conception of his dignity and in consequence looks down on certain mortals whom he regards as his inferiors, and wastes a good deal of thought and mental energy on the problem of how to comport himself towards them so as to keep them in what he considers " their places." All which trivial cares and aspirations are fatal to the preservation of youth and confirm the unfortunate being early in the dull, complacent, egregiously self-important habits of thought and bearing that belong to a deplorable—I was almost saying disreputable—old age of the spirit from which there is rarely any recovery.

The healthy man never talks or thinks about his health, his youth, or his dignity; as soon as he begins to worry about these things you may be pretty sure that he has lost them. Your health only needs doctoring and your dignity asserting when they are broken down; and you are assuredly old if you think you are. Unless you keep continually alive and in touch with the new developments of life and thought around you, adapting yourself to them, going about alertly, with a mind open to receive new impressions, to acquire new knowledge, to form new opinions as your old ones become obsolete, you cannot hope to retain your youth. It is as unwholesome for you to cling stubbornly to-day to your yesterday's beliefs and opinions as it would be for the oak if it had to start the spring with last year's leaves. The world is always going on and always changing, and it is your own fault if you loiter behind self-satisfied, or sit down obstinately and grow old-fashioned and begin to die, burdened with the useless, withered, exhausted, sapless ideas that you should have shed long since to make way for new ones.

Once close your mind against healthful outside influences, once collect your little store of

wisdom and shut it up inside, and you will not even preserve it ; it will become dry and stale and crumbly for lack of fresh additions to leaven it and keep it sweet, and then it is that you proceed to ossify throughout and grow unquestionably old.

" Stone walls do not a prison make," and rheumatics, bodily weakness, mere stiffness of the carnal joints—these cannot reduce you to a bedridden, aged condition except in the most superficial sense. But there is a gout of the soul, a rheumatism of the spirit, that signifies old age and the end of things. " We talked of old age," writes Boswell. " Johnson (now in his seventieth year) said, ' It is a man's own fault, it is from want of use, if his mind grows torpid in old age.' The bishop asked if an old man does not lose faster than he gets. Johnson : ' I think not, my lord, if he exerts himself.' One of the company rashly observed that he thought it was happy for an old man that insensibility comes upon him. Johnson (with a noble elevation and disdain) : ' No, sir, I should never be happy by being less rational.' "

There are ever so many ways of growing old, however, and sooner or later too many of us go astray into one or another of them. We

make a little money, perhaps, and, bitten with a fever to make more and yet more, we turn our backs upon the unprofitable loveliness of life and, hot on the quest, burrow farther and farther away from the simple happiness, the freshness and morning feeling that is youth; and when, at last, we struggle up again into the daylight for an interval, we are earthy, soiled, weary, burdened with riches that cannot buy what we are most in need of; we have degenerated into purblind, blinking, inwardly squalid creatures, wheezy money-bags on two legs, with not an ounce of poetry left in us to give the lump a little lightness, having thrown away a good thing and paid a ruinous price for a fretful old age that was not worth having at a gift. We could have youth and the best of life for nothing, but we usually prefer to toil and scrape and spend ourselves in order that we may purchase a lot of showy lumber that we could live very comfortably without.

We may grow old, too, through an overdose of poverty; but we need not. For, after all, if you will but look at things quietly and sanely and see them in their due perspective, so long as you can maintain a roof above you in rough weather, buy fuel against the cold, and have

sufficient food in your larder for to-morrow, you are not poor, and you must be a tragically inefficient person if you cannot find means to raise the cost of such a modest but ample felicity as that.

"He's rich that asks no more,"

and he's poor in the worst possible way who aspires to live by his neighbour's light because he has none of his own to live by. Granby—very likely you are acquainted with him—is supposed to have got on in the world, and some folk suspect that I envy him; but I don't believe that I do. He has built up a huge business and paved his way into Society with gold. He and his wife and daughter dwell in an imposing mansion that is four times too large for them; they have two servants apiece to minister to their wants, and three over for the look of the thing. He has had to drop the less affluent of his old friends, who felt some affection for him, and has replaced them with a higher-class set who condescend to dine with him occasionally, criticise his manners, laugh at him behind his back, scarcely know him out of doors, and have no love for him at all. His dinners are luxurious and costly, but

he gives them because they are expected of him, and not because he enjoys them; he does not live as he would like to, but as he conceives the polite world into which he has intruded would consider a man of his money ought to live. And it costs him so much that I hear he is never out of debt; his income increases yearly, but his debts outpace it every year, and as a consequence he is never able to escape from his business. He is a slave to all sorts of conventions, yet has a delirious vision of himself as a master of men. If he goes on a holiday, he takes his anxieties with him; he cannot forget his responsibilities; all forms of amusement seem a trivial waste of time to him, and he is restless, fidgety, irritable, until he can get back to his sordid, strenuous grinding at the mill. He rides everywhere in his motor-car, and I have to do most of my journeying afoot; but he has chronic dyspepsia and a liver complaint and has to diet himself, and I can make a meal of whatever is eatable, at any time of the day, and be properly nourished by it. He rents a box at the theatre, and I can afford nothing finer than a seat in the pit, but we both see the same play, and I have noticed him sitting there bored and abstracted,

casting up his liabilities, anxious about his business and investments, whilst I, having no such vanities to think of, have been laughing wholeheartedly at the entertainment.

There was a time when he and I were young together, but now he is hopelessly old, body and soul. He has influence, social distinction, general importance, almost everything except health, contentment, happiness and the cheap and natural details that make one young; if he can dodge the official liquidator for another year or two he may even obtain a title; nevertheless, for myself, sooner than sell my birthright of youth for such a mess of very cold pottage, I would revert to the primitive, informal, easy habits of my remote ancestors and roost freely in the trees and satisfy my appetite with nuts and berries.

Certainly, sorrow can make us old too, for youth is happiness; but there are remedies against sorrow, if we will use them. Work is the great anodyne; work for its own sake, for humanity's sake, for the benefit of others, and not for the reward in coin or glory that it may yield you for your private account. If instead of breaking your heart with grief, you keep closer than usual to any decent task-work for a

time, resolutely forcing yourself to take up your accustomed day's burden and go on with it, your mind being so preoccupied, your sorrow will not be the less, but you will feel it the less and suffer no malign effects such as would have come of its indulgence.

Disappointment may make you old, but you have the same sovereign remedy against that. Don't expect too much of life; if, like the rest of us, you only succeed in getting most of the things you do not want, think yourself lucky that nobody takes them away from you. It is hard to climb the Jungfrau in a dream, and then wake to find you have merely been having a long nap on Primrose Hill; but you can gain nothing but wrinkles by brooding on it, and if, losing no time in coddling your despairs, you promptly get up and resume your journey, you may still have more than enough of life remaining in which to reach the mountain of your dreams and do all the climbing on it that is good for you.

All this thoughtless chatter of age and of a man's being "too old" at forty, sixty, or eighty, except in the contemptible bodily sense, is the emptiest folly. Life is not to be valued by its length, but by its fulness; and

there is no more certainty that youth will redeem its promise than that maturity will not achieve something we had never hoped of it. Men die at all ages, and at forty you may still live longer than your neighbour's promising son who has just attained his majority. They are saying of him, no doubt : " This young fellow is on the threshold of a brilliant career ; he has the world before him ; his future is rich in possibilities ; he will do great things." And perhaps he catches cold to-morrow, and is dead the day after. At the same time, the same wiseacres are very likely saying of you : " This man is turned forty ; we know what he can do by what he has done, and nothing particular is to be expected of him now."

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Make up your mind you need never be too

old for anything in this world, except perhaps leap-frog and football, and not always for them. I like that sturdy old ballad of "Sir Andrew Barton," and when I meet a melancholy man who imagines he must be old because he has a grey beard and has acquired a silly practice of putting more trust in the calendar than in himself, I counsel him to abandon his elementary arithmetic and read how Lord Howard made his choice when he was selecting a scratch crew for the fleet that was to sail out against an approaching enemy :

> "The first man that Lord Howard chose
> Was the ablest gunner in all the realm,
> Though he was three score year and ten :
> Good Peter Simon was his name" ;

and I am readier to take off my hat to the memory of that young Peter Simon than to any of the successful but old bores who are immortalised in Smiles's "Self-Help."

Some men are too old at twenty, and others too young at seventy when they are afflicted, as they occasionally are, with a belated and unseemly giddiness ; but as a rule, supposing you have lived sensibly, and have sifted the few plain things that matter out of the glittering heap of things that do not, by the time you

are fifty you should be just getting old enough to realise how young you are and that you have still plenty of life before you to do all that is worth doing—if not on this planet, then, by-and-by, on another.

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